Walter Pater's Marius the Epicurean: a study of the novel major themes

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with Walter Pater's only completed novel, Marius the Epicurean. Although the novel is set in the Antonine period of Ancient Rome, it is to some extent an account of Pater's own philosophical development, and I have considered it, first, as autobiography. After a discussion of the textual history of the novel, and its place in Pater's proposed fictional trilogy, I have examined the philosophical content in more detail, tracing the course of Marius's philosophic 'journey', and relating it to Pater's reading of German philosophy. I have then gone on to look at it as a 'religious' novel, examining it as a reflection of Pater's anthropological attitude towards religion, and also as a reflection of nineteenth century religious controversy. Pater was looking for a 'religious phase possible for the modern mind', and I have attempted to assess how far he followed Arnold in replacing conventional religious belief by 'culture', defining, in doing this, what 'culture' meant to Pater. Finally, I have discussed Marius in relation to Pater's other fiction, tracing recurring themes, in particular the themes of death, the woman and corruption.

Thus the thesis attempts to isolate particular aspects of this novel, and then to relate them to wider issues.

WALTER PATER'S MARIUS THE EPICUREAN:

A STUDY OF THE NOVEL'S MAJOR THEMES.

A dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in the University of Durham.

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C O N T E N T S

Short Titles and Abbreviations

All references to the text of Pater's published works, unless otherwise indicated, are to the 10-Volume Library Edition of the Works of Walter Pater published by Macmillan & Co. Ltd. in 1910. I have abbreviated the most commonly cited volumes as follows:

Marius	Marius the Epicurean: his Sensations and Ideas, 2 vols.
Appreciations	Appreciations, with an Essay on Style.
Gaston	Gaston de Latour: An Unfinished Romance.
The Renaissance	The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry.
Miscellaneous Studies	Miscellaneous Studies: A Series of Essays.

Unless otherwise indicated, all references to Arnold's published works are to the 15-Volume Library Edition of the Works of Matthew Arnold, published by Macmillan & Co. Ltd. in 1903 and 1904.

Throughout my text and notes, I have used certain other short titles and abbreviations. They are:

Letters	Lawrence Evans (ed.), Letters of Walter Pater (Oxford, 1970).
Wright	Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater (London, 1907), 2 vols.

Contemporary periodical material has been abbreviated as follows:

FR	Fortnightly Review.
MM	Macmillan's Magazine.
WR	Westminster Review.

Modern critical material has been abbreviated as follows:

CLS	Comparative Literature.
EIC	Essays in Criticism.
NCF	Nineteenth Century Fiction.

Introduction

Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas was first published in 1885, when Walter Pater was 45. It has been called an 'apologia pro vita sua',[1] and it is true that it is to a large extent autobiographical.

Marius's early life resembles closely the circumstances of Pater's own life. Pater's hero, like himself, was brought up by a widowed mother, although Pater had a brother and two sisters, while Marius was an only child. Pater's mother, like his hero's, died during his adolescence. Yet the external 'setting' of the novel is less important than Marius's internal spiritual and emotional development: it is significant that the book is sub-titled His Sensations and Ideas. Marius's internal development parallels the philosophical and spiritual movement of Pater himself, and the book could be called Pater's spiritual autobiography.

Like Marius, Pater was a devout, religious child who looked forward to becoming a priest:

> He was instinctively inclined to a taste for symbolical ceremony of every kind. In the family circle he was fond of organising little processional pomps, in which the children were to move with decorous solemnity.[2]

1. Wright II, p.85.
2. A.C. Benson, Walter Pater (London, 1906), p.3.

In both Pater and Marius, this liking for religious ceremonial persisted well into adolescence. Wright records, albeit extravagantly, Pater's religious fervour when he was a pupil at the King's School, Canterbury:

> He may be said to have lived only when he was in Church. His ecstasy, indeed, during these services, reached an exaltation comparable only to that of impassioned saints and martyrs.[3]

But this extreme enthusiasm did not last. Marius's faith is shaken when his mother dies, and Pater records his increasing scepticism, ending with his acceptance of the New Cyrenaicism. Pater is here recording his own gradual disillusionment with orthodox Christianity. He had gradually moved away from acceptance of traditional doctrines, and in 1868 published, in his review Poems by William Morris in the Westminster Review,[4] his own 'New Cyrenaicism':

> While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers and curious odours, or the work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend ..... The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract morality we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.[5]

3. Wright I, p.70.
4. Pater, 'Poems by William Morris', WR, XC (October 1868), p.300-312.
5. Ibid. p.311.

Although these words had appeared anonymously, still in Oxford and London W. H. Pater was becoming known as a daringly original thinker and critic. He was known for his attacks on Christianity, and in particular, on Anglican orthodoxy. The publication of Studies in the History of the Renaissance, in 1873, made Pater famous. Mary Arnold Ward records the effect this book had. She notes its 'entire aloofness from the Christian tradition of Oxford', and its opposition to the Christian doctrine of self-denial and renunciation:

> It was a gospel that both stirred and scandalised Oxford. The bishop of the diocese thought it worth while to protest. There was a cry of 'Neo-paganism' and various attempts at persecution .... In those days Walter Pater's mind was still full of revolutionary ferments ....[6]

Yet this revolutionary fervour did not last. In Marius, Pater shows Marius's return to religious faith; at the end of the book he is left at the threshold of Christianity, attracted by the beautiful liturgy and sense of community of the early Christians. Pater appears to have made this return to religion himself. Mrs. Ward, who knew Pater well and was one of the earliest reviewers of Marius,[7] wrote:

> The interesting and touching thing to watch was the gentle and almost imperceptible flowing back of the tide over the sands it had left bare. It may be said, I think, that he never returned to Christianity in the orthodox or intellectual sense. But his heart returned to it. He became once more endlessly

6. Mrs. Humphry Ward, A Writer's Recollections, 1856-1900 (Collins, 1918), p.120.
7. Mary Arnold Ward, 'Marius the Epicurean', MM, 52 (1885), p.132-139.

interested in it, and haunted by the 'something' in it which he thought inexplicable.[8]

The editor of Pater's collected Letters, Lawrence Evans, feels that much of Pater's return to orthodoxy is the result of the hostility and suspicion that his early writing had caused. He notes that in 1882, he begins to sign himself in letters as 'Walter Pater' rather than 'W. H. Pater', 'as if to announce a new image: the man of letters, reticent and ingratiating, in place of the W. H. Pater who distressed clerical Oxford, was denounced from the episcopal pulpit, and forfeited by his independence of outlook some cherished prospects of advancement when he signed his name in 1873 to Studies in the History of the Renaissance'.[9] It is interesting that Marius is the first of his published works to be signed 'Walter Pater'. Between 1869 and 1885, his works are signed 'Walter H. Pater'.

Thus the development of Marius's opinions closely resembles Pater's own development. Marius's spiritual journey is in fact Pater's own. Both have a traditional and orthodox youth, enjoying the outward forms of religion and seemingly devout. Both reject the 'old orthodoxies' as they grow older, and prefer the 'truth' of personal experience, becoming sceptics. Both return to religion towards the end of their lives, though Marius has made the journey from paganism to Christianity, as well as the

8. Mrs. Humphry Ward, A Writer's Recollections, p.121.
9. Letters p.xxii.

journey back to faith. Pater and his hero seem to share a similar kind of Christianity. Marius never really commits himself to a definite belief; he admires the beauty of the Christian ritual but remains a spectator. Pater, too, remained a bystander:

> It is true that his attitude to religion had changed; but to a really serious and thoughtful Christian it must surely have appeared that the change had been much for the worse. The scoffer is a familiar devil, for whom there are prescribed methods of exorcism: but what is a deeply religious man to do with someone who treats religious belief simply as one potential aesthetic grace among many?

wrote Philip Toynbee.[10]

Yet, although Marius is undoubtedly autobiographical, there is much more to it than an account, albeit disguised, of Pater's own life. In this study, after considering the textual history of the novel, I shall examine Marius as a philosophical work. I shall then go on to look at Marius as a 'religious' novel, and will try to assess how far Pater, following Arnold, has substituted 'culture' for orthodox religious belief. Finally, I shall relate Marius to some of Pater's other fictional works, principally Gaston de Latour and the early Imaginary Portraits. In this way, I hope to reveal common themes which recur in Pater's fiction.

10. Philip Toynbee, 'Rebel into Pussycat', Observer 16 August 1970.

Chapter I

Marius the Epicurean: his sensations and ideas was first published in two volumes by Macmillan and Company on 4 March, 1885. Pater had originally intended Marius to appear, not in novel form, but in a succession of parts in a contemporary periodical. To this end, he submitted his first two chapters to Macmillan's, and on 10 June, 1884, George A. Macmillan passed them on to John Morley, editor of Macmillan's Magazine, commenting that they were 'intended as you will remember, for the Magazine'.[1] All Pater's previous work, critical essays on art and literature, had been published in the magazines, in the Fortnightly Review, Westminster Review or in Macmillan's Magazine, although some had subsequently been gathered into book form to make Studies in the History of the Renaissance, published by Macmillan in 1873. Similarly, Pater's only published earlier work of fiction, The Child in the House had been published as a magazine contribution, appearing in Macmillan's Magazine in August 1878.[2] The Child in the House was a short, self-sufficient work, as Pater pointed out in a letter to George Grove, the then editor of Macmillan's Magazine:

> It is not, as you may perhaps fancy, the first part of a work of fiction, but is meant to be complete in itself; though like the first of a series, as I hope, with some real kind of sequence in them, and which I should be glad

1. Letters p.55,n.i.
2. Pater, 'The Child in the House', MM, 38(August 1878), p.313-321.

> to send to you. I call the M.S. a portrait, and mean readers, as they might do on seeing a portrait, to begin speculating - what came of him?[3]

Yet, although Marius had much in common with The Child in the House, Morley rejected it as unsuitable for magazine publication. Pater had obviously realised that the larger scale of Marius necessitated a new mode of publishing. As he wrote to Alexander Macmillan:

> I was not surprised that Morley was unable to take my M.S. for the magazine, its unfitness for serial publication having sometimes occurred to me, though for some reasons I should have preferred that mode. I am now thinking of offering it to a publisher with a view to its appearing in the spring. I should feel much honoured if you could take it.[4]

Pater had been occupied almost exclusively with the writing of Marius for several years. Between April 1880, when The Marbles of Aegina appeared in the Fortnightly Review, and the publication of Marius in 1885, his only other work had been a paper on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, published six years after it was written, in Appreciations (1889).

Evans[5] cites the 'earliest indisputable reference to the composition of Marius' as a letter of Vernon Lee's (Violet Paget) of 24 July, 1882, where she speaks of Pater doing

3. Letters p.29. 17 April 1879.
4. Letters p.55. 9 September 1884.
5. Letters p.40n.

'something in the way of a novel about the time of Marcus Aurelius'.[6] Thomas Wright, Pater's biographer, in his usual chatty, familiar style, refers to Pater's progress on the composition of Marius:

> Pater spent the summer of 1882 in Cornwall, and on his return he said to Mr. Jackson,[7] "I have made some progress with my Marius, the setting of which is to be ancient Rome in the time of Marcus Aurelius. Similar studies - suggested by the changes of a soul - have occupied the minds of scholars of all ages; but mine will I think have a savour - a bouquet of its own. It only now remains for me to go to Rome, as I shall at the end of the year, in order to vivify the sentiments to which you have given expression and to obtain local colour".....
>
> To Rome, therefore, Pater went, and having surrendered himself to the influences of 'mouldering plinths', 'vague entablatures' and 'shattered cornices', he returned to England and proceeded hot-foot with his project.[8]

As we see from a letter to Violet Paget, Pater intended to spend six or seven weeks at Rome and Naples in December to January 1882-3.[9] A letter from his sister Hester Pater, also to Violet Paget, written in February 1883, records that he had spent a month in Rome.[10] Pater seems to have worked on Marius throughout 1883, and Evans notes[11] that he gave up a proposed return to Italy, in the summer of 1883, in order to remain with his work in Oxford. By mid-1883, the work was almost half-finished. Pater wrote to Violet Paget in July 1883:

6. Vernon Lee's Letters p.105. (Cited by Evans).
7. Richard Jackson, Pater's friend.
8. Wright II, p.59.
9. Letters p.46. 18 November 1882.
10. Letters p.48. 24 February 1883.
11. Letters p.46n.

> I have hopes of completing one half of my present chief work - an Imaginary Portrait of a peculiar type of mind in the time of Marcus Aurelius - by the end of this Vacation, and meant to have asked you to look at some of the MS perhaps. I am wishing to get the whole completed, as I have visions of many smaller pieces of work the composition of which would be actually pleasanter to me.[12]

Violet Paget stayed with the Paters from 18 - 21 June, 1884 and during her visit heard Pater read from Marius.[13] By September 1884, Pater was considering publication of his whole work, as his letter to Alexander Macmillan, already cited, shows. A subsequent letter to Macmillan confirms this:

> The M.S. will not be quite complete till the end of October ..... Three quarters of the whole are ready, and the printing might begin at once, if necessary.[14]

By 4 December, Pater could write to Violet Paget: 'I am very busy correcting the proofs of my new book'.[15]

Pater did not intend Marius to be complete in itself, but rather to be the first volume of a trilogy. The unfinished Gaston de Latour, compiled by C. L. Shadwell, after Pater's death was to heve been Volume 2. The first five chapters of this projected 'sequel' to Marius appeared in Macmillan's Magazine between June and October 1888, and the last, The Lower Pantheism appeared as Giordano Bruno in the Fortnightly Review of August 1889. In a letter to William Canton, assistant editor of the Contemporary Review, Pater described Gaston

12. Letters p.52. 22 July 1883.
13. Letters p.54n.
14. Letters p.56. 14 September 1884
15. Letters p.56. 4 December 1884.

as 'a sort of Marius in France, in the sixteenth century'.[16] Some years before, Pater had written to Carl Wilhelm Ernst, an American journalist:

> I may add that Marius is designed to be the first of a kind of trilogy or triplet, of works of a similar character; dealing with the same problems under altered historical conditions. The period of the second of the series would be at the end of the sixteenth century, and the place France: of the third, the time, probably the end of the last century - and the scene, England.[17]

He repeated this outlined scheme several weeks later in a letter to William Stanley Withers, Registrar of the Royal Manchester College of Music, who had invited him to lecture at Sale:

> Marius is meant to be the first of a kind of trilogy of works, dealing with similar problems, under different historical conditions; in France, at the end of the sixteenth century; and in England, at the end of the 18th.[17(a)]

But Gaston was never completed, and the last volume of the trilogy scarcely attempted, though Evans suggests that the few pages of notes headed Thistle in the Harvard MSS might have been intended for this unwritten work.[18] However it is important to bear in mind, when considering Pater's aims and intentions in Marius, his projected large-scale work, and the place Marius was to have in it.

Pater's choice of the age of Marcus Aurelius for the setting of his novel immediately suggests that Marius will be some kind of 'historical' work, where portrayal of accurate historical

16. Letters p.126. 22 January 1892.
17. Letters p.65. 28 January 1886.
17(a). Letters p.66. 13 March 1886.
18. Letters p. 65n.

background, and awareness of political and sociological trends will add to the total success of the work. In fact Marius is not a 'historical novel' in this sense at all, for the creation of accurate and convincing historical background is secondary to the main purpose of the novel, the tracing of Marius's developing consciousness and his spiritual journey to the threshold of Christianity. As Eugene Brzenk points out,[19] although Marius, along with some of Pater's other writings, could superficially be defined as historical fiction, in fact 'the characteristics which have distinguished this type of narrative since the time of Sir Walter Scott are not found in Pater's works.' In Marius, Pater records such historical events as the triumphal processions of Marcus Aurelius, the marriage and funeral of Lucine Verus, and the games in the amphitheatre. He introduces a variety of historical personages - the Empress Faustina, Marcus Cornelius Fronto, Galen, Lucian, and Apuleius. Yet he remains primarily concerned with Marius's philosophical journey; the historical events and personages serve merely as the markers recording different stages in Marius's development. His interest in the past is not that of the historian or antiquarian.

Several contemporary reviewers saw this lack of 'historical' awareness in Marius as a weakness, and criticised Pater for

19. E. Brzenk, 'The Unique Fictional World of Walter Pater', NCF, 13 (December 1958), p.217-226.

failing to do what, in fact, he had never attempted. Although Mary Arnold Ward, in a generally perceptive and sympathetic review, saw that the purpose of the book was to trace 'the development of a sensitive mind', she finds fault in Marius with the lack of any political or historical awareness:

> Has it done justice to the complexities either of the Roman world or of Christianity in the second century? In fairness to Marcus Aurelius and the pagan world, ought there not to have been some hint of that aspect of the Christian question which leads Renan to apply to the position of the Christian in a pagan city the analogy of that of a Protestant missionary in a Spanish town where Catholicism is very strong, preaching against the saints, the Virgin, and processions? Would it not have been well, as an accompaniment to the exquisite picture of primitive Christian life, to have given us some glimpse into the strange excitements and agitations of Christian thought in the second century?[20]

Yet Pater is concerned with historical events only in so far as they affect the isolated individual consciousness. His aim is to explore the narrow chamber of the individual mind, not to record the difficulties of Christian minority groups.

For another critic, reviewing Marius for the Edinburgh Review,[21] Pater has tried to write a historical novel, but has failed. The reviewer demands that the historical novel should create a 'vivid and true' picture of life in bygone times, and finds Marius deficient. He compares Pater's work unfavourably with the second subject of his review, Naera: A Tale of Ancient Rome by J. W. Graham, published in London in 1886. Although he

20. Ward, 'Marius the Epicurean', MM, 52 (1885), p.132-139.

21. Anon. 'Two Roman Novels', Edinburgh Review, 165(1887), p.248-267.

complains that Naera has too many incidents, a contrast with Marius which has none, he considers Graham's action-packed story preferable to Pater's philosophical explorations, and commends it as 'an interesting and powerful tale'.

But Pater approaches the age of the Antonines as a philosophical, rather than as an historical, state, and it is what the era represented historically, not the events which occurred within it, which interest him most. Pater set his novel in the Antonine period to fit in with a projected philosophical scheme, and it is in this connection that his intentions of writing, not merely an independent novel, but an interdependent trilogy, throw light on Marius. As well as considering why Pater should choose the Antonine age as the setting for Marius it is necessary to consider what connections exist between the proposed settings for the projected trilogy.

The choice of setting is independent of purely antiquarian interest. Pater does not set out to recreate a past era, but rather to illuminate the problems of his own time by revealing the similarities between past ages, and his own. Mary Ward points this out in her review:

> (Sympathetic readers) will see in (Marius) a wonderfully delicate and faithful reflection of the workings of a real mind, and that a mind of the nineteenth century and not the second. 21(a)

In Marius, Pater explores philosophical positions familiar to

21(a). Ward 'Marius the Epicurean', MM, 52 (1885) p.134.

his nineteenth century reader. The disillusion with orthodox religion, the positivism of Mill and Comte, the theories of Darwin and Spencer, the Hegelian view of history, Spinoza's philosophy, and Goethe's quest for universality are some of the themes reflected in Marius. Sometimes, Pater points out this parallelism in a direct way, to the reader:

> That age and our own have much in common - many difficulties and hopes. Let the reader pardon me if here and there I seem to be passing from Marius to his modern representatives - from Rome, to Paris or London.[22]

Pater's choice of Antonine Rome as a setting for his novel has been discussed by several critics, notably R. V. Osbourn, Kenneth Allott and L. M. Rosenblatt.[23] Allott finds the 'germ' of Marius in Matthew Arnold's essay Marcus Aurelius, first published in the Victoria Magazine in November 1863 (p.1-19) and later reprinted in Essays in Criticism (1865). In Arnold's essay, Allott finds not only the inspiration for Pater's novel, but also the origin of Pater's conception of the 'modernity' of the Antonine age, and its relevance to Victorian England.

The essay is concerned with a new translation of Marcus

22. Marius II, p.14
23. R.V. Osbourn, 'Marius the Epicurean', EIC I (1951), p.387-403.
K. Allott, 'Pater and Arnold', EIC II (1952), p.219-221.
L.M. Rosenblatt, 'The Genesis of Marius the Epicurean', CLS, 14 (1962), p.242-265.

Aurelius's Meditations by a Mr. Long.[24] Arnold commends the way in which this new translation conveys to the reader the contemporary application of the Meditations:

> But that for which I and the rest of the unlearned may venture to praise Mr. Long is this: that he treats Marcus Aurelius's writings, as he treats all the other remains of Greek and Roman antiquity which he touches, not as a dead and dry matter of learning, but as documents with a side of modern applicability and living interest, and valuable mainly so far as this side in them can be made clear: that as in his notes on Plutarch's Roman Lives he deals with the modern epoch of Caesar and Cicero, not as food for schoolboys, but as food for men, and men engaged in the current of contemporary life and action, so in his remarks and essays on Marcus Aurelius he treats this truly modern striver and thinker not as a Classical Dictionary hero, but as a present source from which to draw 'example of life, and instruction of manners'.[25]

Marcus Aurelius, says Arnold, has more relevance to 'modern' thought, than figures who are historically closer to us, for 'he lived and acted in a state of society modern by its essential characteristics, in an epoch akin to our own'.[26]

Louise Rosenblatt, agreeing with Allott's conclusion that Pater drew his inspiration from Arnold, comments:

> To think of Arnold's words in 'Marcus Aurelius' as the germ of Pater's book is thus not only plausible but also satisfying, since it adds another link in the close and intricate relationship between the two writers.[27]

Once we are aware that Pater intended Marius to be part of a trilogy, the connection between the two writers seems even

24. George Long, The Thoughts of M. Aurelius Antoninus (trans.) (Bell & Daldy, 1862).
25. Matthew Arnold, 'Marcus Aurelius', Essays in Criticism, p.382.
26. Ibid. p.389.
27. L.M.Rosenblatt, 'The Genesis of Marius the Epicurean', p.243.

stronger. Pater's proposed trilogy would have been set in classical Rome, in the world of sixteenth century France, and in late eighteenth century England, periods which, for him, shared a common philosophical ethos. These three ages, are for Pater periods during which experimental truth had an ascendency over theory. In the search for truth, the individual cannot rely on traditional received values, which have become indefensible assumptions, but must take his own sense experience as his sole criterion of judgement. We see in Marius the reliance on individual sense experience as the keystone of reality:

> It was still, indeed, according to the unchangeable law of his temperament, to the eye, to the visual faculty of mind, that those experiences appealed - the peaceful light and shade, the boys whose very faces seemed to sing, the virginal beauty of the mother and her children.[28]

In his essay on Winkelmann, which first appeared in the Westminster Review of January 1867, and was later reprinted in Studies in the History of the Renaissance, in 1873, Pater glorified the Renaissance discovery of the sensuous life:

> On a sudden the imagination feels itself free. How facile and direct, it seems to say, is this life of the senses and understanding when once we have apprehended it![29]

The same phrase, 'this life of the senses and understanding' occurs in Arnold's essay Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment, which appeared in the same volume of Essays in Criticism

28. Marius II, p.106.
29. Pater, Studies in the History of the Renaissance (London, 1873), p.153.

as the Marcus Aurelius essay. It had originally appeared in the Cornhill Magazine of April 1864 as Pagan and Christian Religious Sentiment. The phrase is used by Arnold, as by Pater, as a definition of the Renaissance:

> The Renaissance is, in part, a return towards the pagan spirit, a return towards the life of the senses and the understanding.[30]

In this essay, Arnold is concerned with the dichotomy between two modes of life, that sensuous mode of 'senses and understanding' and that life of 'heart and imagination' exemplified by St. Francis. His main concern is the necessity of balance: neither sense and intellect, nor heart and imagination are, in isolation, enough. The tangible must be balanced by the intuitive. Interestingly Arnold selects, as times when 'sense and intellect' were in the ascendent, the three periods which Pater is to choose as the proposed settings for his trilogy. In Arnold's view, the pagan world had this life of the 'senses and understanding' as had the Renaissance world. Finally, the eighteenth century had it too:

> But the grand reaction against the rule of heart and imagination, the strong return to the rule of the senses and understanding, is in the eighteenth century.

Thus, if it is possible that Pater drew his inspiration for Marius from Arnold's essay, then Arnold's philosophical outlook on other historical periods may equally well have determined the setting for the trilogy as a whole.

30. Arnold, 'Pagan and Christian Religious Sentiment', Cornhill Magazine, 9 (April 1864), p.432.

After Arnold's essay, there were several essays in contemporary periodicals, also dealing with similarities between Antonine Rome and Victorian England. W. W. Story's article,[31] A Conversation with Marcus Aurelius exposes Christianity to the criticism of the rational stoic. Aurelius attempts to expose the Church's efforts to formulate a Truth, which becomes so rigid that it becomes 'like the dead mummies of the Egyptians - the form of life, not the reality'. The Christian apologist cannot justify his beliefs, falling back on the lame excuse that, as his faith is a mystery, there can be no attempt at explanation: 'It is a mystery,' I said, 'that one like you, born in another age, and tinctured with another creed, could not be expected to understand'.

In 1875, Pater's former pupil, T. H. Escott, published an essay entitled Two Cities and Two Seasons - Rome and London AD408 & 1875 in Macmillan's Magazine.[32] This compares the London season with life in Pagano-Christian Rome, and though its tone is light, and the parallel is meant to be amusing, he is alive to the follies and vices around him, and his light-hearted tone does not disguise his moral intention. A further article, specifically on Marcus Aurelius, appeared in the Fortnightly Review in 1882.[33] Its author, Frederic Myers,

31. W. Story, 'A Conversation with Marcus Aurelius', FR, 13 (1873), p.178-196.
32. T.H.S. Escott, 'Two Cities and Two Seasons - Rome and London AD408 + 1875', MM, 32 (July 1875), p.247-258.
33. F.W.H. Myers, 'Marcus Aurelius Antoninus', FR, 31 (May 1882), p.564-586.

apologised for 'treating once again' a subject which has lost its literary freshness:

> Few characters in history have been oftener or more ably discussed during the present age, an age whose high aims and uncertain creed have found at once impulse and sympathy in the meditations of the crowned philosopher.

Thus, it seems that the parallels pointed out by Arnold were enlarged by later writers, and, as Louise Rosenblatt says,[34] ideas of similarities between Antonine Rome and Victorian England were 'in the air'.

Given this essential inspiration for the siting of Marius it is likely that Pater drew extensively on a book written by his Oxford tutor, W. W. Capes, for specific historical details. This book The Roman Empire of the Second Century or The Age of the Antonines, published by Longmans in 1876 contains most of the anecdotes about Marcus Aurelius which we find in Marius. R. V. Osbourn claims:

> This book, published in 1876, and the sources referred to by Capes, provided the historical material imaginatively treated by Pater.[35]

There are slight verbal echoes of Capes' book in Marius. Capes writes of Verus, for a time Marcus Aurelius's co-ruler:

> In default of manlier pleasures, he loved to have the poor gladiators in to fence and hack themselves.[36]

Pater's chapter on the gory proceedings in the amphitheatre is

34. Rosenblatt, p.247.
35. Osbourn, p.387.
36. W. Capes, The Roman Empire of the Second Century (Longmans, 1876), p.99.

ironically entitled 'Manly Amusement'.

However, since Marius is not a historical novel, it is necessary to consider what indeed it is. In the novel, Marius makes a philosophic journey, which takes him from the pagan 'religion of Numa', the religion of his ancestors, to the edge of an acceptance of Christianity. It is a novel exploring philosophic conflict. Its outline is neatly summed up by Louise Rosenblatt:

> Marius, after a childhood pervaded with the charm of traditional religious observances, becomes a skeptic. He passes through a phase of intense aestheticism, then derives from the literature and philosophies of the ancient world an aesthetically and morally elevated Epicureanism. At the court, he encounters the exalted morality of Marcus Aurelius, but the Stoic philosopher lacks the warm humanity, the gracious hopefulness, which Marius finally discovers in the Christian community at Rome. Although he remains an agnostic, he meets his death by taking the place of his Christian friend in a time of persecution.[37]

Pater presents Christianity, not as a dogmatic assertion demanding belief, but as a tenable philosophy. He avoids the necessity of commitment, yet sees his novel in terms of his own personal obligation to Victorian society. As he wrote to Violet Paget:

> I regard this present matter as a sort of duty.[38]

He goes on to describe to Violet Paget his intentions in writing Marius. The paper to which he refers is an article written by Miss Paget in the Contemporary Review, vol. XLIII, January -

37. Rosenblatt, p.242.
38. Letters p.52. 22 July 1883.

June 1883, entitled The Responsibilities of Unbelief: A Conversation between Three Rationalists. Vere, the aethete, advocates the isolation of the 'beauties' of religious belief. Truth, or otherwise, does not matter:

> Since this inestimable faculty of self delusion exists, why not let mankind enjoy it; why wish to waste, to rob them of this, their most precious birthright?

Rheinhardt shares the aestheticism, but without Vere's concern for the happiness of the masses. Baldwin is a 'militant humanitarian atheist', convinced of the unbeliever's responsibility towards a deluded society. He is not a willing atheist, for he sees that faith makes a sorrowful world more cheerful. But 'he has discovered the inadequacy of the pursuit of the beautiful'.

Pater, in his letter to 'Vernon Lee' (Violet Paget) hopes that Marius will show that there is:

> A fourth sort of religious phase possible for the modern mind, over and above those presented in your late admirable paper in the Contemporary.[39]

There are echoes of 'Vernon Lee's' article in Marius, most strikingly in the passage where Pater describes the death of Flavian, Marius's friend. Baldwin has a similar experience of loss:

> It was the first time that death came near me .... It gave me a frightful moral shock ... the sense of the complete extinction of his personality, gone like the snuffed out flame, or the spent foam of the sea, gone completely nowhere, leaving no trace, occupying no other place, became the past, the past for which we can do nothing.

39. Letters p.52. 22 July 1883.

Paralleling this is Marius's experience of bereavement:

> To Marius ... the earthly end of Flavian came like a final revelation of nothing less than the soul's extinction. Flavian had gone out as utterly as the fire among the still beloved ashes.

But Pater presents the 'fourth possibility'. Baldwin, faced with the loss of his faith, is forced to abandon religion, and face the world anew as a rationalist. Pater shows that there is a 'religious phase' possible, even after this loss of faith. Marius continues to see his sense experience as the sole criterion of truth. But by equating the beautiful with the true, and the aesthetically pleasing with the religious, Pater can depict a 'religion' ultimately dependent on the individual response to, and consciousness of, the facts of his sensory experience. The 'religious phase' enables him to have the consolation of religion on his own terms. The Christianity into which he is virtually received at the end of the book does not demand an assent to dogma. It is 'authoritative' only in the sense that it represents to Marius the most perfect expression of beauty which can satisfy his cultivated sensibility:

> It was not in an image, or series of images, yet still in a sort of dramatic action, and with the unity of a single appeal to eye and ear, that Marius about this time found all his new impressions set forth, regarding what he had already recognised, intellectually, as for him at least the most beautiful thing in the world.[40]

Pater is clearly postulating that this is a position which can

40. Marius II, p.128.

be adopted in his own day. As Hough says, 'The religious development of a cultivated agnostic in the time of Marcus Aurelius is meant to indicate a possible development for a cultivated agnostic in the time of Queen Victoria.'[41]

Since the philosophic journey is a major preoccupation of the novel, I propose next to analyse it in some detail. Marius opens in Marius's childhood home, an old Roman villa where the boy lives with his widowed mother. The household is concerned with the rigid observance of traditional Roman religion. Marius is devout and enters fully into the celebration of time-honoured rites. He has a sense of 'conscious powers external to ourselves',[42] and a sense of the mystery which is hidden beneath the external manifestations of 'reality'. There is a traditional inherited priesthood in the family, and Marius officiates at the Ambarvalia, where images of Ceres and Bacchus are carried in procession. From the outset of the novel, Marius has the desire to withdraw from the actual: he leaves hurriedly when the animals are brought in to be slaughtered. His main preoccupation is the payment of due respect to the Unseen presences which he feels around him. For the past is part of the present: his ancestors live on:

41. G. Hough, The Last Romantics (1947), p.144.
42. Marius I, p.5.

> But the dead genii were satisfied with little - a few violets, a cake dipped in wine, or a morsel of honeycomb. Daily, from the time when his childish footsteps were still uncertain, had Marius taken them their portion of the family meal, at the second course, amidst the silence of the company. They loved those who brought them their sustenance; but, deprived of these services, would be heard wandering through the house, crying sorrowfully in the stillness of the night.[43]

His imaginative apprehension of reality is the basis of his subsequent development. He constructs 'the world for himself in large measure from within, by the exercise of meditative power',[44] and sees the individual as the 'standard of all things'.

His religious sense is developed by a visit to the neighbouring temple of Aesculapius. Here he has a nightmare, and, on waking from it, resolves on the future conduct of his life. He decides:

> to avoid jealously, in his way through the world, everything repugnant to sight; and, should any circumstances tempt him to a general converse in the range of such objects, to disentangle himself from the circumstance at any cost of place, money or opportunity ...[45]

He learns, in the Temple of Aesculapius, the value of detachment, not solely from the admittedly 'ugly', but from a large part of human experience. The shrine keeps separate from its precincts the Houses of Birth and Death: 'perfection' is a static state, withdrawn from human vicissitude into a cloistered isolation.

43. Marius I, p.10.
44. Marius I, p.24.
45. Marius I, p.33.

Shortly after this visit, Marius's mother dies, and he goes off to a school in Pisa, where he meets Flavian, an exponent of Epicurean philosophy and a sceptic. Marius is greatly attracted by him, yet aware of the corruption underlying his perfection of form:

> How often, afterwards, did evil things present themselves in malign association with the memory of that beautiful head, and with a kind of borrowed sanction and charm in its natural grace.[46]

Fatality lies in the quest for beauty, and Flavian dies of a fever. The desolation felt by Marius at Flavian's death finally destroys his lingering belief in 'something beyond', the belief that had sustained the traditional religious observances of the religion of Numa. He now begins, with the 'honest action of his own untroubled, unassisted intelligence', to assess the value of various philosophic systems. He seeks, through the operation of his reason, a satisfactory answer to the mystery of human life, and death.

He examines first the work of Heraclitus, and the doctrine of the flux and instability of the world. He becomes convinced that, in this flux and instability, 'the individual is to himself the measure of all things'.[47] He must rely on the 'exclusive certainty' of his own impressions. Having become a complete sceptic, Marius then resolves to live solely

46. Marius I, p.53.
47. Marius I, p.133.

to satisfy immediate sensation. He decides 'to exclude regret and desire, and yield himself to the improvement of the present with an absolutely disengaged mind. America is here and now - here, or nowhere'.[48] Aristippus of Cyrene, and his 'new Cyrenaicism' becomes his philosophical master. Yet Marius cannot abandon completely his old idealism, to commit himself wholly to the outward life of sensation. When he sets off on his journey to Rome, he carries within him two conflicting philosophic viewpoints - his old idealism, and the new Cyrenaic outlook.

On the journey, he meets Cornelius, a young soldier of the Imperial guard, and a Christian. They travel to Rome together. It is in Rome that Marius confronts, for the first time, the contemporary intellectual situation. Rome is The Most Religious City in the World; 'religions were draining into Rome, as the rivers into the sea'.[49] In the centre of the religious movements is Marcus Aurelius, the philosophic emperor, whom Marius is to serve.

As Ward says, 'There can be no doubt that the picture of Rome which Pater provides is intended as a straightforward analogue ... of the situation in Victorian England'.[50] In

48. Marius I, p.139.
49. A.C. Benson, Walter Pater (London, 1906), p.100.
50. A. Ward, Walter Pater: The Idea in Nature (Macgibbon & Kee 1966), p.148.

Antonine Rome, the old certainties have vanished, yet the ceremonies which celebrated them have remained, and exercise authoritative control over the conduct of everyday life. Marcus Aurelius is intensely aware of the transience of human life, and the vanity of human ambition. While upholding an admirable moral code, he detaches himself from any involvement in the business of living, like someone who feels that 'he is but conceding reality to suppositions, choosing of his own will to walk in a day-dream, of the illusiveness of which he is at least aware'.[51] This detachment leads to toleration of evil. The final chapter of Volume I of Marius shows, in the sight of the Emperor calmly correcting letters as varieties of violence are performed before him in the arena, the limitations of his view of life. Marius, revolted by the spectacle of death, and seeing the Emperor's placid tolerance, rushes away. As he leaves the arena, he meets Cornelius, and is immediately drawn to his 'energetic clearness and purity'.[52]

Marius begins to question the aestheticism which has occupied him so much. He realises that he has a 'strong tendency to moral assents', and a desire 'to find a place for duty and righteousness in his house of thought'.[53] Marius has to review his Cyrenaicism. He had adopted it because it had seemed to him

51. Marius I, p.213.
52. Marius I, p.234.
53. Marius II, p.7.

to be the means by which he might hold himself open to the fullness of experience. Any theory, he had decided, which involved the sacrifice of experience, was untenable. Yet, the theory of Cyrenaicism involves a sacrifice of sympathy, a sacrifice of that natural kindliness for which there is no rational explanation. Cyrenaicism is a philosophy for the young, and can no longer hold Marius. He realises that he has cut himself off from human sympathy, in his pursuit of a life of perfected sensation. He begins to realise the value, not just of his personal cultivation, but of human community. The individual needs organic connection with his society. After an interview with Marcus Aurelius, and further consideration of the Stoic temperament, Marius feels even more strongly the dissidence between him and the philosophic emperor. The Stoic's position is seen finally as untenable when Aurelius, who has been so convinced of the littleness of life, and the insignificance of human love or sorrow, loses a child and is overwhelmed by grief.

Marius realises that he has been denying the sympathy he feels for people and things. In The Will as Vision he finds that it is imaginative sympathy which connects the isolated individual to the forces in his environment which are sustained by the Eternal Reason or, in religious terminology, the Creator:

> And might not the intellectual frame also, still more intimately himself as in truth it was, after the analogy of the bodily life, be a moment only, an impulse or series of impulses, a single process, in an intellectual or spiritual system external to it, diffused through all time and place - that great stream of spiritual energy, of which his own imperfect thoughts, yesterday or today, would be but the remote, and therefore imperfect pulsations?[54]

The 'system' which he encounters next is the community of Christians in Cecilia's household. Not detachment, but co-operation, is man's only hope in a transient world. Sympathy will connect us with a larger humanity:

> The future will be with those who have most of it; while for the present, as I persuade myself, those who have much of it, have something to hold by, even in the dissolution of a world, or in that dissolution of self, which is, for everyone, no less than the dissolution of the world it represents for him.[55]

It is this human sympathy and sense of community which is so attractive in the Christian household. The failure of the philosophical attitude of Aurelius is underlined when Marius watches the Imperial Triumph. Marius is distressed by the sight of the captives in the procession, and by the fact that the Emperor can consent to take part in such a barbarous ceremony:

> Aurelius himself seemed to have undergone the world's carnage, and fallen to the level of his reward, in a mediocrity no longer golden.[56]

So the novel ends with Marius as participant in the Christian expression of community, the celebration of the mass.

54. Marius II, p.68-9.
55. Marius II, p.183.
56. Marius II, p.200.

His admiration for the Christian community, and the extent of his true commitment to it, will be discussed in the next chapter. But philosophically, the idea of community is the goal of the novel, an end to the alienation Marius has felt since leaving his early home.

Pater's concern with alienation, and the possibility of reconciliation, lead us to some acknowledgement of his considerable debt to German philosophical opinions. A full assessment of his immersion in German philosophy is beyond the scope of this study, and in fact has been done before, in Anthony Ward's book Walter Pater: The Idea in Nature.[57] Ward claims that 'Pater's thinking can only be understood if we relate it to the work of the Germans, in particular to that of Goethe and Hegel.[58] What follows is, of necessity, an abbreviated and simplified account of a subject which in itself would provide scope for a whole study. In it, I have drawn extensively on Ward's book, and on Patrick Gardiner's essay 'The German Idealists and Their Successors' in Germany: A Companion to German Studies.[59] This latter provides a coherent and careful account of a highly complex field of study. I have used his summaries of the work of Kant and Hegel to draw together

57. Ward, Walter Pater: The Idea in Nature (1966).
58. Ibid. p.25.
59. ed. M. Pasley, Germany: A Companion to German Studies (Methuen, 1972), p.369-426.

their diverse and wide ranging philosophic systems, and to isolate the themes which form the basis of Pater's philosophic attitudes.

Pater went up to Oxford, said his tutor W. W. Capes, with 'a tendency to value all things German'.[60] Wright claims that 'Pater was fortunate enough (thanks to his knowledge of German philosophy, and especially of the systems of Schelling and Hegel) to gain a Fellowship at Brasenose' in 1864.[61] William Sharp records Pater's claim that, 'at one time I was in the habit of translating a page from some ancient or modern prose writer every day: Tacitus or Livy, Plato or Aristotle, Goethe or Lessing or Winckelmann'.[62] Lionel Johnson also affirms Pater's interest in German literature and philosophy; 'He gave much time to the aesthetic theorists of Germany - Winckelmann, Lessing, Goethe, Hegel - such speculatings as theirs agreed well with the cogitating spirit in him'.[63]

Ward asserts that between 1825 and 1850, there was a proliferation of articles on Goethe in England. With the publication of George Henry Lewes's two volume Life of Goethe in 1855, Goethe's reputation in England as the exponent of the 'scientific' attitude towards the world was established.

60. Edward Thomas, Walter Pater: A Critical Study (London, 1913), p.24.
61. Wright I, p.210
62. W. Sharp, 'Some Personal Reminiscences of Walter Pater', Atlantic Monthly, 74 (December 1894), p.801-814.
63. Lionel Johnson, 'The Work of Mr. Pater', FR, 56 (September 1894), p.352-367.

Ward feels that Pater's appreciation of Goethe was largely moulded by this book. In the chapter The Poet as Man of Science, Lewes states that Goethe rejected the ideal and directed his attention unswervingly towards the real, in an empirical and scientific way. It is this concern with the poet as the expression of the scientific, 'speculative' temper that attracts Pater. Pater retains a belief in the empirical character of knowledge, in the truth of immediate experience, throughout his writing. This is true of Marius: Marius's knowledge is always based on his own concrete observations. Like Goethe, he is a man 'to whom every moment of life brought its contribution of experimental individual knowledge'.[64]

Hegel, perhaps more than Goethe, is a dominant feature in Pater's work, and wrote in the Idealist tradition which owes much to Immanual Kant. Idealist doctrines must be seen in the historical context of their age. In many ways, the Idealists were reacting against the 'scientific' trend of the eighteenth century. The philosophers of the 'Enlightenment' had attached great importance to the progress of natural science, Theological ideas were accused of having their roots in primitive superstition, and were seen as one of the instruments by which the ruling classes kept the mass of population in a state of confused and uncritical servitude. By contrast, scientific

64. Appreciations, p.68.

discoveries, and in particular those of Newton were held to have opened possibilities of unlimited advance; the belief that scientific conceptions and methods, which had helped to explain and control the natural world, could eventually explain man himself, had become a commonplace. Thus, much eighteenth century thought about man showed a pervasively naturalistic or materialistic bias. This bias showed itself at its most extreme in works like La Mettrie's L'Homme machine and Holbach's Système de la Nature.

The German Idealists questioned many of the main assumptions of the eighteenth century empiricists, challenging the view that human life was explicable by, or reducible to, physical factors, subject to psychological or physiological formulations. Yet Kant shared with philosophers such as Hume the belief that our knowledge is confined to what lies within the sphere of possible experience, and he was critical of attempts by speculative metaphysicians to go beyond the realm of immediate 'reality' to provide a portrayal of any 'ultimate' reality. Pater shares this 'anti-metaphysic' outlook, and, as we shall see in Chapter II, is preoccupied with sense experience as the basis of knowledge.

Kant, while sharing this empirical view of the nature of knowledge, differed significantly from earlier philosophies. In previous theories of human knowledge it had been customary

to picture the human intellect as confronting a ready-made world of physical objects and events, the cognitive function of the mind being regarded as one of recording what was presented to it in a passive, mirror-like fashion. By contrast, Kant treated the mind's role in knowledge as being in a quite crucial sense, active or creative. Kant claimed that it was the human mind which supplies the basic structure or framework within which the raw material of sensory experience is organised so as to constitute an objective world. This thesis, with its stress on the creative function of the mind, and its implication that the natural world, as it presents itself to us has the status of being 'appearance' only is the basis of what has been called Kant's 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy.[65] As well as maintaining this emphasis on phenomenal reality, Kant postulated that there existed a sphere of being which human reason could not penetrate. There must be something which the 'appearances' themselves were the phenomenal manifestation. These were 'noumena', in themselves inexperienceable, but 'affecting' the conscious subject so as to produce the sensory data which formed the basis of all objective experience.

To later philosophers, including Hegel, it seemd clear that the two aspects of Kant's hypothesis were incompatible.

65. Pasley (ed), p.376.

The conception of an external reality necessarily beyond the reach of mind was not only inconsistent with the principles which underlay Kant's thinking but also inimical to the spirit that informed it. The 'noumena' were rejected, and the only alternative was a view of reality represented in 'mental' terms. Kant had retained the assumption of extra-mental reality: the Idealists rejected this, and tried to show that what appeared to the thinking individual to be totally distinct from himself was not so in fact. An example of this is Hegel's attitude towards religion. Traditional religion, to him, appeared to involve separation and alienation. God, the human ideal, was posited as distant and transcendent, existing in a realm eternally set apart from suffering humanity. Hegel's philosophical system attempted to reconcile this estrangement, through the concept of Absolute spirit or Geist.

This spirit was not separate from the human mind: there was in fact no distinction between subjective consciousness and objective existence. The apparent 'otherness' of the world, the division between the conscious subject and an objectively conceived 'external' reality, was now seen as a division within the spirit itself. To end this estrangement, the spirit actively developed towards an end in which it might be said to achieve confirmation of its own being. It 'created itself'. In concrete terms, this meant that the history of the world was to be understood as a teleological process, whereby spirit

in the first instance externalized itself in the form of an outward reality that was expressive of its inner potentialities. The process was held to take place at two distinct levels. At one level, spirit manifested itself in the world of natural phenomena. On another, spirit created societies and civilizations which represented concrete expressions of its essential nature and at the same time exhibited stages of its evolution towards a progressively fuller consciousness and understanding of its own character. Man is a developing being, whose nature can only be grasped historically by examination of the successive patterns of life and culture which are the reflection of the stage spirit has reached at this particular period of time. Man is also conditioned by historical circumstances: his outlook on the world will be continually subject to change. It was Hegel's contention that, as this total process continued, involving on one side the emergence of distinct social forms and institutions, and on the other the evolution of fresh and more adequate modes of interpreting experience, spirit gradually moved towards an ever deeper comprehension of its own nature. It finally reached 'absolute knowledge', a state of philosophical understanding in which spirit finally came to recognise that the entire world was the product and articulation of itself. The world would be 'internalized' through philosophical knowledge: the totality of things, previously thought to be external and 'foreign', was the projection of its own rational nature.

The division between thought and reality, constituting the original condition of self estrangement or self alienation, would be healed.

Marius's philosophic journey is closely connected to the Hegelian notion of 'Geist'. Marius moves through various manifestations of 'Geist', the philosophic systems of the Roman world, but is primarily concerned with self-knowledge. All his movement has been inward, towards total consciousness. He is attracted towards the early Christian community because they represent 'veritable regeneration of the earth and the body, in the dignity of man's entire personal being'.[66] Here Marius finds reconciliation and an end to alienation. Significantly, the Christian community shares many of the attributes of 'home', which is so predominant a theme in all Pater's work.[67] It was 'home' that was the Hegelian objective: it was the aim of knowledge 'to divest the objective world that stands opposed to us of its strangeness, and, as the phrase is, to find ourselves at home in it; which means no more than to trace the objective world back to the notion - to our innermost self'.[68] For Hegel, and for Pater, there are times when individuals are estranged from their communities, paying lip-service to standards and outwardly conforming to practices

66. Marius: II, p.122.
67. This study, p.130.
68. William Wallace (trans.), 'The Logic of Hegel' from The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (London, 1950), p.335.

that have lost all hold upon their inner minds and hearts; these are times when people are driven back upon themselves, and are impelled 'to seek refuge from the present in ideal regions - in order to find in them that harmony which it can no longer enjoy in this discordant real world'.[68(a)]

For community is Hegel's ideal, and it is community which Pater desires more and more as Marius progresses. In the Hegelian 'state', as in Pater's Christian community, the will of the individual and the will of the community can be said to coincide.

In this brief survey, it becomes clear that Pater owes much to German philosophy, particularly to Hegel. German philosophical thought underlies all Pater's work, and it has been possible only to give a general outline of it here. But Pater did not intend Marius to be a philosophical work. He wrote it 'to show the necessity of religion',[69] and it is as a religious novel that I propose to examine it next.

68(a). Wallace, p. 339.
69. Wright II., p.87.

Chapter II

Pater's assertion that he wrote Marius 'to show the necessity of religion'[1] has led several critics to see the novel as Christian apologetic, and one such critic, Margaret Maison, has gone so far as to call it 'a didactic religious novel'.[2] But, although it is true that the novel traces Marius's development from the paganism of his childhood, to the threshold of Christianity, it is necessary to consider what Pater meant by 'religion' before defining his novel as a tale of religious conversion.

'Religion' for Pater is not necessarily a commitment to particular dogma, but rather the acknowledgement of a non-rational part of man which can be satisfied only by religious ritual. Reason and intellect must recognise this irrational longing for the Unseen, for what is 'behind the veil'.[3] Christianity, or any other form of religious belief, is a necessary philosophic assumption. Pater explains this in a letter to Mrs. Humphry Ward, written a few months after the publication of Marius:

> To my mind, the beliefs, and the function in the world, of the historic Church, form just one of those obscure but all-important possibilities, which the human mind

1. Wright II, p.87.
2. Margaret Maison, Search your Soul, Eustace (Sheed & Ward, 1961), p.296.
3. Appreciations, p.82.

> is powerless effectively to dismiss from itself; and might wisely accept, in the first place, as a workable hypothesis. The supposed facts on which Christianity rests, utterly incapable as they have become of any ordinary test, seem to me matters of very much the same sort of assent as we give to any assumption, in the strict and ultimate sense, moral.[4]

In Marius, Pater deals with 'possibilities' and 'assumptions', not with certainties. His review of Mrs. Ward's Robert Elsmere,[5] a novel about a young clergyman whose doubts about the historical basis of Christianity force him to leave the Church, sheds light on Marius's position of philosophic uncertainty throughout Marius. Distinguishing between those who are not certain the Christian story is true, and those who are not certain it is false, Pater claims a place within the Church for the ambiguous position of the latter:

> For their part, they make allowance in their scheme of life for a great possibility and with some of them that bare concession of possibility (the subject of it being what it is) becomes the most important fact in the world. The recognition of it straightway opens wide the door to hope and love; and such persons are, as we fancy they always will be, the nucleus of the Church. Their particular phase of doubt, or philosophic uncertainty, has been the secret of millions of good Christians, multitudes of worthy priests. They knit themselves to believers, in various degrees, of all ages.[6]

It is at this stage of doubt that, in Marius, Marius is absorbed into the Christian community. Uncertainty, rather than conviction, is the goal Pater has set for him:

> Surely, the aim of a true philosophy must lie, not in futile efforts towards the complete accomodation of man to the circumstances in which he chances to find himself,

4. Letters p. 64. 23 December 1885.
5. Pater, 'Robert Elsmere', The Guardian, 28 March, 1888.
6. Essays from the 'Guardian', p.68.

> but in the maintenance of a kind of candid discontent, in the face of the very highest achievement; the unclouded and receptive soul quitting the world finally, and with the same fresh wonder with which it had entered the world still unimpaired, and going on its blind way at last with the consciousness of some profound enigma in things, as but a pledge of something further to come.[7]

Marius has the advantages of Christianity, its sense of brotherhood, its beautiful ritual, without the sacrifice of his independent judgement. For to call Marius 'Anima Naturaliter Christiana'[8] does not pledge him to any dogmatic assertion of Christian doctrines. The phrase is taken from Tertullian, who considers Christianity 'a natural knowledge', intrinsic in every man, even if not specifically recognised. The New Catholic Encyclopedia explains the phrase, and this throws light on the position into which Pater leads Marius:

> Like Hellenistic philosophers, Tertullian looks for knowledge of God from the world outside man, and from the world within man's soul. Thus he appeals even to the witness of the pagan, a witness that he terms 'the testimony of the soul naturally Christian' (testimonium animae Naturaliter Christianae). Even the pagan, he says, by different exclamations ... spontaneously testifies to his knowledge of God (one and unique) and of those Christian truths which belong to the sphere of natural knowledge.[9]

Underlying this phrase, the Encyclopedia goes on, is an awareness of the anthropological necessity of religion. In all cultures, there is 'a tendency towards transcendence' which 'belongs necessarily to a real individual and collective human existence' and witnesses to the 'anima naturaliter Christiana'.

7. Marius II, p.220.
8. Marius II, p.208.
9. New Catholic Encyclopedia I, p.545.

This reference to the anthropological necessity of religous belief is particularly interesting, since it is true to say that Pater approached religion as an anthropologist, not as a dogmatist. He attempts an almost scientific, detached examination of Marius's development, from philosophic system to philosophic system. It is difficult to be certain how much Pater knew of the new science of anthropology, developing, particularly in Oxford, in the 1870s and 1880s. It is certain, however, that he knew Andrew Lang, journalist, writer of fairy tales, poet and anthropologist.[10] Lang went up to Oxford in 1864, two years after Pater had taken his degree, and in the year that Pater was elected Probationary Fellow at Brasenose.[11] In 1868, Lang became a Fellow at Merton, where he remained until his marriage in 1875. As Evans says: 'very little is known of his connection with Pater, except that he received a presentation copy of Studies in the History of the Renaissance. Lang instructed his wife to destroy all the letters he had accumulated'.[12] In a letter to John Chapman, editor of the Westminster Review, Pater recommends an article written by Lang:

> I send you by this post an article on The Chanson de Roland, which seems to me to have great merits, by my friend, Mr. Andrew Lang, Fellow of Merton College, the author of a volume of translations from French poets etc.

10. For detailed discussion of Lang's importance as an anthropologist, see Cocq, Andrew Lang, a Nineteenth Century Anthropologist (Tilburg, 1968), passim.
11. Wright I, p.211.
12. Letters p.11n.

> which you may have seen. He is now at Cannes, and has entrusted the article to me, hoping that you might be able to find a place for it in the Westminster Review.[13]

As well as compiling books of fairy tales, ballads and folk-lore, Lang wrote several works of a scientific, anthropological nature.[14] He claimed to be an amateur anthropologist:

> I am only an amateur .... rather as one of the outer circle - of the court of the Gentiles - than as a professed anthropologist.[15]

In the same essay, Lang records the development of scientific anthropology in the second half of the nineteenth century:

> It is to be noted that in 1860 - 1870, a fresh scientific interest in matters anthropological was 'in the air'. Probably it took its rise, not so much in Darwin's famous theory of evolution, as in the long ignored or ridiculed discoveries of the relics of paleolithic man by M. Bouch de Perthes.[16]

This growing interest was reflected by the founding, in 1871, of the first Journal of the Anthropological Institute for Great Britain and Ireland.[17]

One of the major figures in this increase in anthropological studies was Edward Burnett Tylor. In 1865, he brought out his Researches into the early history of mankind, but his major work was Primitive Culture: Researches into the development of

13. Letters p.11.27 November 1872.
14. Lang, Custom and Myth (1884), Myth, Ritual and Religion (1887), The Making of Religion (1898), Magic and Religion (1901), The Secret of the Totem (1905), The Origins of Religion and Other Essays (1908).
15. Tylor, Anthropological Essays presented to Edward Burnett Tylor (Oxford, 1907), Introductory Essay by Lang. p.1.
16. Ibid. p.1.
17. Cocq, Andrew Lang, p.38.

mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom which came out in 1871. According to Lang, upon the publication of this work, Tylor:

> at once appeared as the foremost of British anthropologists .... He laid firm foundation of a structure to which, with accruing information, others may make additions; but his science passed, thanks to him, out of the pioneering stage, at a single step.[18]

Lang records that he met Tylor for the first time in Oxford in 1872, and the Merton College Library Register records that Lang borrowed Primitive Culture in March 1872.[19]

Although there is no direct evidence of Pater having met Tylor, it is unlikely that he could have been unaware of the growing interest in anthropology then current in Oxford. In 1883, Tylor was appointed keeper of the University Museum, and in 1884 became Reader in Anthropology. He was eventually to become Oxford's first Professor of Anthropology, in 1896.

At the time that Pater was writing Marius Tylor was delivering his first public lectures in Oxford, on anthropology. On 15 February and 21 February, 1883, he delivered lectures at the University Museum on 'Evolution and Anthropology' and on 'Borrowing Culture'. His extensive bibliography shows that he made many contributions to contemporary magazines,

18. Tylor, Anthropological Essays, p.6.
19. Cocq, p.42.

including Macmillan's Magazine, and the Fortnightly Review.[20]

Tylor's main interest was in 'belief and institution'.[21] It could be said of him, as Pater said of himself, that his aim was to show 'the necessity of religion'.[22] In Primitive Culture, he shows how earlier ethnographers and anthropologists have described primitive tribes as possessing no religion, when in fact, they have failed to recognise an unfamiliar form of religion:

> They attribute irreligion to tribes whose doctrines are unlike theirs, in much the same manner as theologians have so often attributed atheism to those whose deities differed from their own.[23]

Tylor maintains the anthropological ubiquity of religious belief, and, as Lang comments: 'We are also made to see that man is, and will continue to be, a religious animal'.[24]

Tylor and Pater have a common approach to religion, treating it in terms of evolution rather than revelation:

> No religion of mankind lies in utter isolation from the rest, and the thoughts and principles of modern Christianity are attached to intellectual clues which run back through prae-Christian ages to the very origins of human civilisation, perhaps even of human existence.[25]

Pater would surely have agreed with Tylor's statement that:

20. Tylor, Anthropological Essays, p.391. (Bibliography compiled by Barbara W. Freire-Marreco).
21. Ibid. p.3.
22. Wright II, p.87.
23. Tylor, Primitive Culture (London, 1871), p.379.
24. Tylor, Anthropological Essays, p.13.
25. Tylor, Primitive Culture I, p.381.

> The connection which runs through religion from its rudest forms up to the status of an enlightened Christianity, may be conveniently treated of with little recourse to dogmatic theology.[26]

We shall see that one of Pater's main reasons for approving of the Catholic Christianity of Cecilia's house was its ability to absorb pagan experience into its totality and universality:

> Already, in accordance with such maturer wisdom, the Church of the 'Minor Peace' had adapted many of the graces of pagan feeling and pagan custom ... In this way an obscure synagogue was expanded into the Catholic Church.[27]

Though Tylor establishes the 'necessity of religion', this in no way detracts from the importance of the independent human reason or the working of individual judgement. For he shows the possibility of 'the scientific study of religion'.[28] Every human action or institution is the effect of a 'cause' - or if it seems inexplicable or irrational, this is solely because our present information is defective and cannot interpret it yet. He optimistically asserts that 'law is everywhere'.[29]

> Causeless spontaneity is seen to recede farther and farther into shelter within the dark precincts of ignorance; like chance, that still holds its place among the vulgar as a real cause of events otherwise unaccountable, while to educated men it has long consciously meant nothing but this ignorance itself. It is only when men fail to see the line of connexion in events, that they are prone to fall upon the notions of arbitrary impulses, causeless freaks, chance and nonsense and indefinite unaccountability.[30]

26. Tylor, Primitive Culture I, p.21.
27. Marius II, p.125.
28. Tylor, Primitive Culture II, p.409.
29. Ibid. Vol. I, p.22.
30. Ibid. Vol. I, p.17.

Tylor believes in the ability of rational, modern man to account for the institutions and rites of earlier, though still rational, man. Religion is a universal and inevitable phenomenon:

> Far from these world-wide opinions being arbitrary or conventional products, it is seldom even justifiable to consider their uniformity among distant races as proving communication of any sort. They are doctrines answering in the most forcible way to the plain evidence of men's senses, as interpreted by a fairly consistent and rational primitive philosophy.[31]

The fundamental necessity of religion is the basis of Tylor's work. As a scientist, though, he can still assert the primacy of the individual intellect in its control over any examination of religious evolution. The problem facing Pater is the reconciliation of the anthropological and emotional necessity of faith with a growing scepticism and a humanistic concern for the independence of the individual mind. As the American critic, Knoepflmacher has commented: 'Pater is trying, through the persona of a pensive young skeptic, to bridge the gap between his belief in the exclusive validity of his own senses and his increasing awareness of the necessity for moral laws for which he could find no correlative in the visible world.[32] Marius is a portrayal of a search for truth, where truth can no longer be defined by tradition or by corporate acknowledgement of any 'system' of belief. Forty years before Marius,

31. Tylor, Primitive Culture I, p.387.
32. U.C. Knoepflmacher, Religious Humanism in the Victorian Novel, (Princeton, 1965), p.154.

when Charles Reding in Newman's Loss and Gain searched for 'truth', this was an external quality, existing outside the individual, and in the possession of one group.[33] Increasing individual perception brought increasing awareness of this Truth, but, it had an independent existence. For Pater, 'truth' is much more limited: it exists in the perception itself. Truth is relative, sought by the individual in his isolation, and significant only in relation to that individual's experiences. There is a discrepancy between the two kinds of 'truth' - that of the individual's experience, where there are no absolutes and where every experience exists solely on its own terms and that 'truth' embodied in traditional received systems, where absolute values appear to exist beyond the immediacy of experience. In his essay on Coleridge, Pater defines these two approaches as the 'relative' and the 'absolute'.[34] In his view, Coleridge shares the German philosophers' longing for the transcendent, that which is 'behind the veil'.[35] Coleridge looks for a system, an Absolute which will satisfy his need for 'first principles'. He has 'a passion for the Absolute, for something fixed where all is moving'.[36] In this essay, Pater is entirely on the side of the 'relative' spirit, though he sympathises with the longing for the Absolute. He urges the desirability of forgetting

33. J.H. Newman, Loss and Gain, (Burns & Oates, 1848).
34. Appreciations, p.66.
35. Ibid. p.82.
36. Ibid. p.104.

the 'distant horizon', in order to be content with the immediacies of experience. Man must define for himself what is 'true', not by reference to a visionary ideal, but by examination of his own experiences. The 'ideal' eventually weakens by becoming part of traditional received values, and becomes, finally, merely an indefensible assumption:

> Hard and abstract moralities are yielding to a more exact estimate of the subtlety and complexity of our life.[37]

But, since faith is 'necessary' how can human longing for the Unseen be satisfied, when traditional dogmatic religion has ceased to be intellectually satisfying, or true to the individual's experience?

Traditional faith was crumbling away. Mrs. Humphry Ward, writing her introduction to Robert Elsmere in 1888 records the religious and intellectual tumult of Oxford, in the mid eighteen seventies:

> As far as my own personal recollection goes, the men of science entered but little into the struggle of ideas that was going on. The main Darwinian battle had been won long before 1870; science was quietly verifying and exploring along the new lines; it was in literature, history and theology that evolutionary conceptions were most visibly and dramatically at work. The ever-advancing study of comparative religion, and of the earliest documents and primitive history of Christianity - there lay in truth the chief interest of these years.[38]

As Knoepflmacher points out,[39] Pater was an undergraduate at

37. Appreciations, p.67.
38. Mrs. Humphry Ward, Robert Elsmere (Mifflin, 1911), vol. I, p.xii.
39. Knoepflmacher, p.151.

Oxford from 1858 to 1862, a crucial four year period of ferment which saw the publication of the work of Darwin, of Bishop Colenso, and of The Seven Against Christ. Darwin published his Origin of Species in 1859. Colenso, Bishop of Natal, from 1853, published in 1861 his commentary on Romans which plainly held lax views on Biblical inspiration, and formally withdrew the belief in external punishment which he had publicly professed before his consecration as bishop eight years before. In 1862 he published his Pentateuch,[40] which attempted to prove arithmetically that the Bible was not infallible: 'However oddly or naively he reached the judgement, here was a bishop of the Church of England claiming to be a bishop while he held that the Pentateuch was in parts unhistorical, and a compilation of different sources'.[41] Biblical criticism appeared to be shaking the foundations of traditional Christian teaching. In 1860, 'the seven against Christ', seven contributors to Essays and Reviews, attempted 'to publish a volume to encourage free and honest discussions of Biblical questions'.[42] Chadwick isolates several leading ideas which emerge from these essays. First, a gap has opened between Christian doctrine and the beliefs of educated men. Secondly, it was held that all truth was from God, though the

40. Colenso, The Pentateuch & Book of Joshua Critically Examined (London, 1862).
41. O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church (London, 1970). vol. 2, p.92.
42. Ibid. p.75.

detailed record of Christianity may not be true. The Anglican church had previously held that the Bible was the word of God. H. B. Wilson, the Editor of the volume, pointed out that the thirty-nine articles, which defined Anglican doctrine, did not claim divine inspiration for the Bible. The bishops of the Church of England condemned the book, and two of the contributors were prosecuted in the ecclesiastical courts. Both were suspended from their benefices for one year, although in the judgement, Anglican clergymen were allowed to deny the genuineness of any book in the Bible if they did not deny the divine authority, were allowed to interpret all historical narrative as parable, poetry or legend, and might deny that any prophecy in the Old Testament was messianic. Chadwick discusses the significance of this judgement and subsequent appeal in The Victorian Church.[43]

Mrs. Humphry Ward goes on to discuss the ferment of Oxford which took place after the publication of these early works on Biblical criticism. When she first knew Oxford :

> Ecce Homo had just been published; Baur's Saint Paul, the Vie de Jesus, and Strauss's Neues Leben Jesu were comparatively new books. Before my husband and I left Oxford in 1881, all Renan's Origins had appeared, so had Literature and Dogma and Supernatural Religion, while Germany had seen the rise of that richer and more varied theological school of which Harnack has now become throughout Europe the chief representative.[44]

Ecce Homo was published in 1865 by Macmillan and was a life

43. Op. Cit. p.75ff.
44. Ward, Robert Elsmere, p.xii.

of Christ, concentrating on Christ the moralist, and stripping away Church interpretations of his significance. Baur's Saint Paul, first published in English in 1873, was an investigation of Paul on historical terms. Strauss's Neues Leben Jesu published in 1835 was an attempt to write a biography of Jesus as a human person, investigating the historical circumstances of his life. In 1863 Ernst Renan published his biography of Jesus. Again he described Jesus as a man: 'An original genius; a great soul; a superior person; an incomparable artist; a lovable character; an idyllic and gentle nature - this was not the language of reverence'.[45] Supernatural Religion appeared in 1874, a third volume in 1876, and was a destructive attack on New Testament documents, placing the four Gospels and Acts towards the end of the second century. Matthew Arnold's Literature and Dogma (18[illegible]) was an attempt to 'recast religion', and to sketch a rational Christianity.[46]

Religion was under attack from scholars and textual critics; Christian documents were being examined in the light of new scholarship; old traditions were dissolving. Yet the awareness of traditional orthodoxies lingered on. Mrs. Ward continues:

> the old orthodoxy weighed upon England and on the minds of us all, like that consciousness of the Empire on the

45. Chadwick, vol. 2, p.63.
46. For detailed discussion of the impact of new textual criticism on traditional assumptions, see Chadwick, vol. 2, p.40-111 passim.

> minds of Goth and Frank - a presence just withdrawn or withdrawing, or 'still incalculably potent.[47]

It is this potency which we feel strongly at the beginning of Marius when Marius is still immersed in the Religion of Numa. The 'older orthodoxies' linger on, expressions of a deep human need, yet out of touch with the actuality of human experiences:

> The persons about him, certainly, had never been challenged by those prayers and ceremonies to any pondering on the divine nature: they conceived them rather to be the appointed means of setting such troublesome movements at rest. By them, the 'religion of Numa', so staid, ideal and comely, the object of so much jealous conservatism, though of direct service as lending sanction to a sort of high scrupulosity, especially in the chief points of domestic conduct, was mainly prized as being, through its hereditary character, something like a personal distinction - as contributing, among other accessories of an ancient house, to the production of that aristocratic atmosphere which separated them from newly made people.[48]

Marius is torn between the claims of orthodoxy and the independence of his sensations and thoughts:

> For Marius the only possible dilemma lay between that old ancestral Roman religion, now become so incredible to him and the honest action of his own untroubled, unassisted intelligence.[49]

In Marius, Pater attempts a synthesis of the need for faith, expressed in the orthodoxies of traditional belief, and individual experience. He postulates 'a religious phase possible for the modern mind'.[50] by basing religion on the individual's sense experience of the world. Marius's sense experience is

47. Ward, Robert Elsmere, p.xxvi.
48. Marius I, p.8.
49. Marius I, p.125.
50. Letters p.52. 22 July 1883.

the basis of his ethical and philosophical judgement; he becomes 'the seer ... of a revelation in colour and form'.[51]

But this revelation is his alone: he is an isolated consciousness, and his pursuit of truth is meaningful only to himself. The isolation of the individual is a major theme in all Pater's work. The conclusion of The Renaissance emphasised the incommunicable nature of human experience:

> Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed around for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of these impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.[52]

This theme of isolation is continued in Marius:

> Given that we are never likely to get beyond the walls of the closely shut cell of one's own personality; that the ideas we are somehow impelled to form of an outer world, and of other minds akin to our own, are, it may be, but a daydream perhaps idler still: then, he, at least, in whom those fleeting impressions - faces, voices, material sunshine - were very real and imperious, might well set himself to the consideration, how such moments as they passed might be made to yield their utmost, by the most dextrous training of capacity.[53]

Personal concern for truth should be our only concern; our experiences cannot be conveyed accurately to anyone else:

> Of other people we cannot truly know even the feelings, nor how far they would indicate the same modifications, each one of a personality really unique, in using the

51. Marius I, p.54.
52. The Renaissance, p.235.
53. Marius I, p.148.

> same terms as ourselves; that 'common experience' which is sometimes proposed as a satisfactory basis of certainty, being after all only a fixity of language.[54]

Marius is always his own standard of judgement:

> A vein of subjective philosophy, with the individual for its standard of all things, there would be always in his intellectual scheme of the world and of conduct, with a certain incapacity wholly to accept other men's valuations.[55]

It is significant that Dr. Dixon Hunt, in his book on the Pre-Raphaelites should have chosen a quotation from Pater's Renaissance as the title for his chapter on the Pre-Raphaelite concern with the isolated individual consciousness.[56] In Marius, Pater is concerned with 'the narrow chamber of the individual mind'. The subtitle of the book is 'His sensations and ideas', and it is with Marius as a reflective consciousness that he is pre-occupied. The external world has no significance other than in its relation to Marius's thought.

We have seen that contemporary reviewers found fault with the lack of 'incident' in Marius.[57] We see the 'internal' quality of Marius even more strikingly if we compare it with J. H. Shorthouse's novel John Inglesant, first published in 1881. Broadly speaking, it might seem to have many aims in common with Marius. Shorthouse called it: 'an attempt at a

54. Marius I, p.138.
55. Marius I, p.25.
56. J.D. Hunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination 1848-1900 (1968) p.73ff.
57. See p.12.

species of literature which I think has not hitherto had justice done to it .... Philosophical Romance'.[58] Like Marius, it is concerned with the hero's spiritual journey: 'This is a story of the religious quest, the search for the True Way of Life, laid in England and Italy in the seventeenth century, and among some of the spiritual seekers of that profound and noble epoch'.[59] True, we follow Inglesant's spiritual wanderings, from Anglo-Catholicism to Roman Catholicism, but certainly no reviewer could have complained of lack of 'incident' here. Sensation follows sensation, with murder, plague, executions and intrigue. Often plot seems to triumph over theme, to enable Shorthouse to incorporate yet more scenes of plotting or poisoning. Compared with this contemporary 'religious novel',[60] Marius in its concern for the individual consciousness, rather than for sensationalism, is strikingly modern.

Marius's isolation and detachment from incident and event is constantly emphasised. He is always a 'spectator'[61] and the world around him becomes a form of arrested pageant: 'The numerous cascades of the precipitous garden of the villa, framed in the doorway of the hall, fell into a harmless picture'.[62]

58. J.H. Shorthouse, John Inglesant, (New Edition, 1881), vol. I, p.v.
59. J.E. Baker, The Novel and the Oxford Movement (Princeton, 1932), p.182.
60. Baker refers (Ibid. p.182) to Paul Elmer More who called JI 'the nearest approach in English to a religious novel of universal significance'.
61. Marius I, p.46.
62. Marius II, p.77.

The workings of his mind take on a religious significance. Pater repeatedly uses the word 'meditation' in connection with Marius's thought processes.[63] There is reference to his search for 'vocation'[64] and to his search for perfected experience as a form of the contemplative life.[65] Thought processes must be subject to discipline and direction. Writing of the discipline of Heraclitus's philosophy, Pater writes:

> Hence those many precepts towards a strenuous self consciousness in all we think and do, that loyalty to cool and candid reason, which makes strict attentiveness of mind a kind of religious duty and service.[66]

The Prayer Book echo of the last phrase underlines the religious responsibility which Pater attributes to thought.

Marius's thought is based on his sensory experience, and therefore appearances take on a moral significance. The visible becomes the displayer of the Unseen: 'An outward imagery identifying itself with unseen moralities'.[67] By relying so entirely on the primacy of sense experience as the medium of 'religious' communication, Pater attempts his reconciliation of the conflict between traditional religion and individual perception. The essence of conventional religious faith is the acceptance of some form of extra-personal authority.

63. Marius I, p.126; p.157.
64. Marius I, p.152; p.187.
65. Marius I, p.134.
66. Marius I, p.130.
67. Marius I, p.34.

This is necessarily at odds with any humanist consideration of the freedom of the individual consciousness. But, having established sense impression as the means of revelation, Pater substitutes, for Church authority, the authority of individual sense experience.

Pater continually refers to the primacy of sense impression in Marius's religious quest. Stages of his philosophic journey are marked by people or places. Although Flavian and Cornelius are not presented directly to the reader, their significance is in their physical reality apprehended visually by Marius. It is Cornelius's beauty which first attracts Marius:

> It was here, to while away the time, that Cornelius bethought himself of displaying to his new friend the various articles and ornaments of his knightly array - the breastplate, the sandals and cuirass, lacing them on, one by one, with the assistance of Marius, and finally, the great golden bracelet on the right arm, conferred on him by his general for an act of valour. And as he gleamed there, amid that odd interchange of light and shade, with the staff of a silken standard firm in his hand, Marius felt as if he were face to face, for the first time, with some new knighthood or chivalry, just then coming into the world.[68]

Even after some time, Cornelius's importance remains in the impressions his appearance makes on Marius:

> And it was still to the eye, through visible movement and aspect, that the character or genius of Cornelius made itself felt by Marius ... All influence reached Marius ... through the medium of sense ...[69]

68. Marius I, p.170.
69. Marius I, p.233.

But it would be wrong to say that Pater sees no necessity for advance beyond sense experience. Appreciation of sense experience must be accompanied, on the part of the perceiver, by self-restraint, a kind of monastic self-discipline or asceticism. Flavian is beautiful; he makes a deep impression on Marius's sensibilities; yet lacking this self-restraint, he becomes corrupt, his influence is curtailed, and he comes to a 'pagan end'. He 'yields himself' to the delights of Pisa, and believes only in himself; 'in the brilliant, and mainly sensuous gifts, he had,or meant to acquire'.[70] He dies in despair, and:

> To Marius, at a later time, he counted for as it were an epitome of the whole pagan world, the depth of its corruption, and its perfection of form.[71]

Pater sees the necessity of suggestion of the Infinite, beyond the manifestations of the Finite. Describing the Christian community in Cecilia's house, he does go beyond the immediacy of experience:

> It was still, indeed, according to the unchangeable law of his temperament, to the eye, to the visual faculty of mind, that those experiences appealed - the peaceful light and shade, the boys whose very faces seemed to sing, the virginal beauty of the mother and her children. But, in his case, what was thus visible constituted a moral or spiritual influence of a somewhat exigent and controlling character, added anew to life, a new element therein, with which, consistently with his own chosen maxim, he must make terms.[72]

70. Marius I, p.52.
71. Marius I, p.53.
72. Marius II, p.106.

Pater does not develop this movement from the finite to the infinite, the Creation to the Creator, because it would mean a suspension of individual control over the significance of experience. On the whole, he clings to the tangible, and merely gestures to the Beyond. As Marius stays in the finite:

> It was to the sentiment of the body, and the affections it defined - the flesh, of whose force and colour than wandering Platonic soul was but so frail a residue or abstract - he must cling.[73]

so does Pater. But he acknowledges that the here and now is a physical manifestation of the Unseen.

Given that sense impression is at the root of Marius's apprehension of the Divine, this in no way invalidates the urgency of the spiritual quest. Quest is the most important theme of Marius, and Marius's spiritual journey gives the novel structure and purpose. From the outset, the emphasis is on Marius as a religious being. There is 'an instinct of devotion in the young Marius'.[74] Everything around him has a religious significance, so that new interests are sanctified, becoming 'a rival religion, a rival religious service'.[75] The relation of the earthly and the Divine, and the possible reconciliation of the seen and the Unseen, are the key themes of the novel:

73. Marius I, p.125.
74. Marius I, p.5.
75. Marius I, p.44.

Marius is almost a Pilgrim's Progress: Marius, Marcus Aurelius, and the spokesmen of the main philosophic groups to which we are introduced are all searching for the Celestial City. There are repeated references to Marius as a pilgrim; he is making an 'individual mental pilgrimage';[76] he looks back at himself as 'the pilgrim who had come to Rome on the search for perfection'.[77] He is clothed for a journey: 'He wore a broad felt hat, in fashion not unlike a modern pilgrim's'.[78] Marcus Aurelius, too, is a pilgrim, 'the imperial wayfarer'.[79] The possibility of revelation, or of eventual attainment of the Celestial City, is the motive of the novel. At the temple of Aesculapius, Pater presents critically the doctrine that what the eye sees affects the mind, but even here, the ultimate intent of their self-cultivation is revelation:

> And throughout, the possibility of some vision, as of a new city coming down 'like a bride out of heaven', a vision still indeed, it might seem, a long way off, but to be granted perhaps one day to the eyes thus trained, was presented as the motive of this laboriously practical direction.[80]

The Celestial City, and the way to reach it, is a recurring image. Fronto's discourse is concerned with it, reminding his audience that:

> we are citizens also in that supreme City on high, of which all other cities beside are but as single habitations.[81]

76. Marius I, p.133.
77. Marius II, p.27.
78. Marius I, p.159.
79. Marius II, p.64.
80. Marius I, p.32.
81. Marius II, p.10.

Marcus Aurelius takes up this theme, with his vision of the new Rome, the 'city on high of which all other cities are but single habitations',[82] an echo of Fronto. He speaks of:

> that unseen Celestial city, Uranopolis, Callipolis, Urbs Beata, in which a consciousness of the divine will being everywhere realised, there would be, among other felicitous differences from this lower visible world, no more quite hopeless death of men, or children, or of their affections.[83]

Of course this vision of the road to the Celestial City is not a specifically Christian one. The image of the journey towards a longed for city is an 'archetypal image', as Professor Sharrock points out in his book on Bunyan.[84] It expresses a universal truth, and appears in many different cultures. But Pater seems to have Bunyan's Christian pilgrimage very much in mind, particularly in his chapter, A Conversation not Imaginary. The two speakers discuss the possibility of reaching the Celestial City:

> Happiness, as Hesiod says, abides very far hence; and the way to it is long and steep and rough. I see myself still at the beginning of my journey; still but at the mountain's foot. I am trying with all my might to get forward. What I need is a hand stretched out to help me ....
> Ah! there are many who start cheerfully on the journey and proceed a certain distance, but lose heart when they light on the obstacles on the way ...[85]

The verbal echoes of Bunyan, and of the Gospels, become more marked as the conversation progresses:

82. Marius II, p.37.
83. Marius II, p.39.
84. R. I. Sharrock, Bunyan (London, 1954).
85. Marius II, p.145.

> Leaving all else, forgetting one's native country here, unmoved by the tears, the restraining hands, of parents or children, if one had them - only bidding them follow the same road; and if they would not, or could not, shaking them off, leaving one's very garment in their hands if they took hold on us, to start off straightway for that happy place.[86]

The road is uncertain and there are many false guides:

> And I find a multitude of guides, who press on me their services, and protest, all alike, that they have themselves come thence. Only, the roads they propose are many, and towards adverse quarters. And one of them is steep and stony, and through the beating sun; and the other is through green meadows, and under grateful shade, and by many a fountain of water. But howsoever the road may be, at each one of them stands a credible guide; he puts out his hand and would have you come his way. All other ways are wrong, all other guides false. Hence my difficulty.[87]

The search reflects an externally unfulfilled longing.

Marius's dissatisfaction with the world precipitates his journey, for he has 'an innate and habitual longing for a world altogether fairer than that he saw'.[88] When assessing the nature of the Divine for which he is searching, it is necessary to take into consideration how far his pursuit of the Divine is provoked by an inability to accept the real, or immediate, world. Is it a positive search for the Celestial City, as a religious state, or a world weariness, an inability to accept the human condition?

86. Marius II, p.153.
87. Marius II, p.154.
88. Marius I, p.45.

Pater's treatment of Marius's experience in the world throws light on his approach to the spiritual quest. The apprehension of the isolated phenomena of fleeting experience lies at the root of his philosophic scheme. Cultivated men should aim at the complete education of 'those powers, above all, which are immediately relative to fleeting phenomena, the powers of emotion and sense'.[89] Yet, there is a constant movement in his work away from a confrontation with the actuality of experience, and towards a static representation of reality. Flavian is 'like a carved figure in motion';[90] he buys zinias, 'like painted flowers';[91] Cecilia reminds Marius of 'the best female statuary of Greece'.[92] The fleeting suspicion of love interest in Marius is soon dismissed: 'The image of Cecilia, it would seem, was already become for him like some matter of poetry, or of another man's story, or a picture on the wall'.[93] For Pater finds the real world inadequate and often sordid; the basis of his religious search is to escape 'like a sick man's longing for northern coolness, and the whispering willow trees, amid the breathless evergreen forests of the south'.[94] The Christian church gives him a means of escape:

> In the midst of its suffocation, that old longing for escape had been satisfied by this vision of the Church in Cecilia's house, as never before.[95]

89. Marius I, p.147.
90. Marius I, p.50.
91. Marius I, p.175.
92. Marius II, p.105.
93. Marius II, p.189.
94. Marius II, p.106.
95. Marius II, p.106.

For Christianity in Marius fulfils a complex psychological need in Pater/Marius, a need which Pater labels 'religious' but which is, in fact, an amalgam of a yearning for security, a veneration of 'home', an urge to escape from the present world, a longing for order, and a strange 'death-wish'. Although the quest image underlying Marius implies movement forward, Marius's instinctive movement is backwards, towards an idealised conception of 'home'. 'Home' takes on a religious significance: Marius has, through his life, a particular regard for the goddess Domeduca who 'watches over one's safe coming home'.[96] His life is a search for 'home', an attempt to recapture the lost, in accordance with the Platonic idea that the Ideal preceded the actual, and that the Beata Urbs cannot, in fact be reached through quest since we have left it behind from birth. With this religious appraisal of 'home' is associated 'order', which itself takes on a religious potency. Order and beauty are associated with Marius's home, White Nights; order becomes 'sacred'.[97] God is the embodiment of order, in the 'Order of the Divine Reason'.[98] Women are closely connected with this religious veneration for home and order. At the heart of White Nights, Marius remembers his mother, lamenting his father, and the complexity of the home/order/feminine values state is summed up by a passage in the chapter entitled White Nights:

96. Marius I, p.10.
97. Marius I, p.37.
98. Marius I, p.197.

> Something pensive, spell-bound, and but half real, something cloistral or monastic, as we should say, united to this exquisite order, made the whole place seem to Marius, as it were sacellum, the peculiar sanctuary, of his mother, who, still in real widowhood, provided the deceased Marius the elder with that secondary sort of life which we can give to the dead ...'[99]

Death, religion and beauty are interwoven. Beauty has within it the suggestion of death. Rome's perfection suggests her nearness to decay:

> The old pagan world, of which Rome was the flower, had reached its perfection in the things of poetry and art - a perfection which indicated only too surely the eye of decline.[100]

This complex interweaving of the death/woman/home/beauty themes is embodied by Pater in his portrayal of the Christian community in Cecilia's house. It is the family life of Cecilia's house which attracts him.[101] The family feeling here is a 'sacred thing',[102] and Cecilia herself becomes a symbol of maternity. It is Cornelius's ordered life which is so appealing to Marius, 'some inward standard of distinction, selection, refusal, amid the various elements of the fervid and corrupt life across which they were moving together'.[103] The Christian Knight has 'an energetic clearness and purity'.[104] Similarly, Cecilia's house is 'well ordered ... arranged and harmonised'[105] - 'there reigned throughout an order and purity'.[106] And at

99. Marius I, p.20.
100. Marius I, p.172.
101. Marius II, p.97.
102. Marius II, p.110.
103. Marius I, p.232.
104. Marius I, p.234.
105. Marius II, p.95.
106. Marius II, p.97.

the centre of the Christian community Pater sees death. The Christian ceremonies take place among the graves:

> Here and there, mingling with the record of merely natural decease, and sometimes at these children's graves, were the signs of violent death or 'martyrdom'.[107]

Even the altar is a tomb:

> The table or altar at which he presided, below a canopy on delicate spiral columns, was in fact the tomb of a youthful 'witness' of the family of the Cecilii, who had shed his blood not many years before, and whose relics were still in this place. It was for his sake the bishop put his lips so often to the surface before him: the regretful memory of that death entwining itself, though not without certain notes of triumph, as a matter of special inward significance, throughout a service, which was before all else, from first to last a commemoration of the dead.[108]

So it is not conventional Christianity to which Marius is attracted: rather he singles out those features of Christianity which fulfil in him a deeply rooted psychological need. In this sense, Christianity is merely an extension of his own psyche.

But Marius does see Christianity as a revelation to man of a 'new order', and able to fulfil a need which earlier religious rituals had failed to fulfil. Christianity, for Pater, provides a divine companion on the individual's 'mental pilgrimage', a 'friendly hand laid upon him amid the shadows of the world'.[109] Yet, the divine companion is but a perfecter of sense experience and thought, remaining firmly

107. Marius II, p.102.
108. Marius II, p.136.
109. Marius II, p.71.

within the world of tangible experience. Having become aware of this companion Marius wonders:

> Must not all that remained of life be but a search for the equivalent of that Ideal, among so-called actual things - a gathering together of every trace or token of it, which his actual experience might present?[110]

For, although Marius is the story of a spiritual quest, Pater's real interest lies in this world. Marius's state of mind when he dies is ambiguous; revelation of the divine demands self-forgetfulness, and self-consciousness is the essence of his existence. Christianity, it seems to him, glorifies man in this world; there is no need for anything beyond:

> It was Christianity in its humanity or even its humanism, in its generous hopes for man, its common sense and alacrity of cheerful service, its sympathy with all creatures, in its appreciation of beauty and daylight ...[111]

which appeals to him. The Church upholds human dignity, and the integrity of man's personality: it has 'dignifying convictions about human nature',[112] giving man, and the earth, a new significance. 'Hope' is at the centre of the final chapters of Marius, for 'hope' is the most important quality possessed by the Christian community. There is no debate within Marius about the historical revelation of God which causes Robert Elsmere such difficulty. The actuality of Christian revelation is not discussed. All that is postulated is that there is 'hope' - 'of something further to come'.[113]

110. Marius II, p.71.
111. Marius II, p.115.
112. Marius II, p.123.
113. Marius II, p.220.

Rationalism is not allowed a final triumph. Irrational 'hope', justified by Christianity, is the final word, and it is hope for the improvement of man, not of divine revelation. Christianity, for Pater and for Marius, is not an authoritative system of belief, but an external force, beautifying man's experience of the world.

It is necessary here to consider how far Christian ritual sways Marius's movement towards 'faith'. Eliot called Marius ' a prolonged flirtation with the liturgy',[114] and Thomas Wright refers to Wilde's comment on Marius's conversion:

> Marius is little more than a spectator, an ideal spectator, indeed ... yet a spectator merely, and perhaps a little too much occupied with the comeliness of the benches of the sanctuary to notice that it is the sanctuary of sorrow that he is gazing at.[115]

It is true that an admiration of ritual for its own sake plays a large part in Marius. Marius is always susceptible to processions, flowers and incense, and the perfection of Christian ritual is certainly one of the main attractions of belief. Christianity is 'for him, at least, the most beautiful thing in the world'.[116] Ritual satisfies for him a psychological need for an expression of the 'mystery' of life: after watching the ceremony of the Mass, 'the natural soul of worship in him had been satisfied as never before. He felt, as he left

114. T.S. Eliot, 'Arnold and Pater' (1930) in Selected Essays 1917 - 1932 (Faber, 1932), p.388.
115. Wright II, p.87.
116. Marius II, p.128.

that place, that he must hereafter, experience often a longing memory, a kind of thirst, for all this, over again'.[117]

Pater was himself well known for his love of ritual. As a child, Wright records, his chief pleasure was playing at priests, forming processions and preaching.[118] Marius has the same amusement: he recalls 'those childish days of reverie, when he played at priests'.[119] As an adolescent Pater dabbled in the refinements of Anglo-Catholicism. He was known as a convinced Ritualist, and would never eat meat in Lent, 'his deportment towards those who did was cold and constrained. The Breviary was as much his companion as the Prayer Book'.[120] However, rather than becoming a Roman Catholic, which many of his friends feared would be the eventual outcome, Pater's reaction to the extremes of his youth led him to doubt, and a gradual lessening of the High Church intensity of his youth. He moved further towards atheism, though still enjoying the beauties of college chapel.[121] According to Wright, he was a non-believer by the age of 21; he destroyed all his books on Christianity. Despite this, he still intended to take orders, and 'still frequented places of worship - though only ornate services with elaborate music and 'sweet heady incense'

117. Marius II, p.140.
118. Wright I, p.21.
119. Marius I, p.132.
120. Wright I, p.109.
121. Ibid. p.153.

pleased him".[122] He attended Ritualist services at S. Thomas' Oxford, but his intentions to become a priest were thwarted by several of his friends, who wrote in protest to the Bishop of London. His interest in Ritual continued: Wright describes the founding of St. Austin's Priory, Walworth, by Nugée, as a crucial point in Pater's life.[123] Nugee set up a monastic community, as well as a richly ornamented Anglo-Catholic Church. Pater attended regularly, and Wright describes St. Austin's thus:

> The services at St. Austin's were of a most ornate description. The Sacrament was reserved, incense was used, and there were processions with banners, the proceedings, indeed, being scarcely distinguishable from those in Roman Churches at the present day ... Pater ... was frequently present, being attracted, as he said, solely by the gorgeousness of the scene.[124]

Nugee, not surprisingly, remonstrated with him, protesting that the ceremonial at St. Austin's was an expression of real faith. Pater was unconvinced: 'The Church of England is nothing to me apart from its ornate services'.[125] However, as he grew older, he seemed to move further towards orthodox Christianity, and became, again in Wright's words 'an avowed Christian of the High Church type'.[126] This is confirmed by Pater's friend Bussell, who was to become vice-president of Brasenose College. Bussell commented:

122. Wright II, p.201.
123. Ibid. p.31.
124. Ibid. p.37.
125. Ibid. p.38.
126. Wright II, p.169.

> His interests centred more and more on the liturgy and fabrics of the Catholic Church; on the truth of the creed from a High Church standard; on the education of the young in the faith of their fathers ... He was never happier than when discussing with child-like simplicity and submission some of the cardinal mysteries of the Faith; and I well recall how he would reprove any symptom of a Rationalizing spirit.[127]

It seems, then, that towards the end of his life, he grew to accept the more traditional interpretations of Christianity, although his Christianity was still of a ritualistic and elaborate kind.

Pater's increasing orthodoxy is reflected by the emendations and alterations which he made to Marius before the second, and more particularly, the third, editions. Chandler has made an extensive study of the textual history of Marius,[128] and records how, after minor alterations of punctuation and word order before the second edition, Pater made over 6,000 changes between the first and third editions.[129] Over 40% of these were punctuation changes, and of a stylistic, rather than semantic, significance: 'The great majority of the textual alterations therefore consist of additions and omissions of, and changes in, words and phrases, changes in word order and variations (principally omissions) of punctuation'.[130]

127. Wright II, p.201.
128. Edmund Chandler, 'Pater on Style: an examination of the essay on 'Style' and the textual history of Marius the Epicurean', Anglistica XI (Copenhagen 1958).
129. Ibid. p.27.
130. Ibid. p.25.

But as well as these stylistic changes, there are alterations which reflect significant shifts of philosophic emphasis. We have seen this revision process in Pater before, a 'toning down' of early unorthodox views to fit in with an increasingly orthodox outlook, a change which one reviewer called 'rebel into pussycat'.[131] A good example of Pater's revising process is his alterations to his article Poems by William Morris. This review was first printed in the Westminster Review in 1868,[132] and subsequently reprinted, with alterations, in Appreciations with an Essay on Style.[133]

Once more, Pater is looking at religion as an anthropologist, and pointing to the similarities between religious fervour and the expression of sensual love. Religious belief, he postulates, has its origins in suppressed emotional and sensual experience:

> That religion shades into sensuous love, and sensuous love into religion, has been often seen: it is the experience of Rousseau as well as the Christian mystics.[134]

But by the 1889 edition, this position has been replaced by a moral admonitory stance. This particular quotation is replaced by:

> That religion, monastic religion at any rate, has its sensuous side, a dangerously sensuous side, has been often seen.[135]

131. P. Toynbee, 'Rebel into Pussycat', Observer, 16 August, 1970.
132. Pater, 'Poems by William Morris', WR, XC (October 1868).
133. Appreciations, (London, 1889).
134. 'Poems by William Morris', p.301.
135. Appreciations, (London, 1889), p.215.

The necessity of channelling sensuous feeling into religious ends, expressed in 1868, is also toned down. Religions must erect idols to compete with the attraction of the flesh, claimed the 1868 version:

> Only by the inflaming influence of such idols can any religion compete with the presence of the fleshly lover.[136]

This passage is struck out in the 1889 version, as is Pater's 'aesthetic' judgement of Christian writings:

> Who knows whether, when the simple belief in them has faded away, the most cherished sacred writings may not for the first time exercise their highest influence as the most delicate amorous poetry in the world.[137]

He qualifies and hedges his first statements, destroying their original impact, so that the statement:

> That whole religion of the middle age was but a beautiful disease or disorder of the senses.[138]

becomes:

> That monastic religion of the Middle Age was, in fact, in many of its bearings, like a beautiful disease.[139]

Single words are changed to alter emphasis. The 'idolatry[140] of the cloister' becomes 'devotion':[141] 'sacrament', in the 1868 version,[142] is given a capital letter in 1889.[143]

136. 'Poems by William Morris', p.301.
137. Ibid. p.302.
138. Ibid. p.302.
139. Appreciations (1889), p.217.
140. 'Poems by William Morris', p.302.
141. Appreciations (1889), p.216.
142. Ibid. p.308.
143. Ibid. p.226.

Similarly, in Marius minor alterations reflect Pater's movement towards a conventional view of religious propriety:

> In the third and fourth parts of Marius, Marius comes directly into contact with a primitive Christian community, and there are many passages describing their manner of living, their beliefs (so far as they had settled to an agreed dogma) and the position of the Church in those times. In the first edition, the 'tone' of these descriptions tends to be at least impartial, if not actually sceptical, and it is notable that in revising the text, Pater excises passages plainly critical of Christianity as a religion, passages which imply a 'historical' approach, and even passages which might be taken as derogatory at first sight.[144]

For example, Pater tones down an implication that Christian development was deficient because it was alienated from the achievements of pagan culture:

> The enemy on the Danube was, indeed, but the vanguard of the mighty invading hosts of the fifth century. Illusively repressed just now, those confused movements along the northern boundary of the Empire were destined to unite triumphantly at last, in the barbarism, which, powerless to destroy the Christian church, was yet to suppress for a time the achieved culture of the pagan world: and with this lamentable result, that the kingdom of Christ grew up in a somewhat false alienation from the beauty and light of the kingdom of the natural man, developing a partly mistaken tradition concerning it, and an incapacity as it might almost seem at times, for eventual reconciliation with it.[145]

The underlined words are omitted from the third edition.

Chapter XXII, The Minor Peace of the Church is cited by Chandler as containing a particularly large number of alterations to comments on Christianity. A passage referring to

144. Chandler, op. cit. p.67.
145. Cited by Chandler, p.68 Marius (1st Ed.) vol. II, p.36.

the decline of Christianity in the Dark Ages is struck out: the third edition contains no reference to the Christianity which:

> miscarried, indeed in the true dark ages through many circumstances, of which the later persecutions it sustained, beginning with that under Aurelius himself, constituted one; the blood of the martyrs ceasing at a particular period to be the true 'seed of the Church'.[146]

Pater also strikes out particularly pro-Roman paragraphs, which might have led his critics to accuse him of Papism. For example:

> And again, it was the church of Rome especially, now becoming every day more and more the capital of the Christian world, feeling her way already to a universality of guidance in spiritual things equal to that of the earlier Rome in the political order, and part of the secret of which must be a generous tolerance of diversities, which checked the nascent puritanism of that time, and vindicated for all christian people a cheerful liberty of heart.[147]

The underlined passage is struck out in the third edition.

Thus, Pater's revisions reveal an increasing Anglican orthodoxy, while in his personal life he continues to practice rites of an Anglo-Catholic nature. The ritual described in Marius is but a part of Pater's deification of sense experience as the instrument of truth. Since Christian ritual is the most perfect expression of man's need for faith, then, of necessity, it must be the most 'true'. Although his emphasis on external form may seem excessive, Pater does in fact use

146. Chandler, p.71 - from Marius (1st Ed.) vol. II, p.132.
147. Ibid. p.72 - from Marius (1st Ed.) vol. II, p.137.

Marius's appreciation of ritual for a particular purpose. As we have seen, one of his major concerns is the reconciliation of traditional 'systems' with the individual consciousness. Ritual becomes the means whereby the individual can take part in the experience of the past, without sacrificing his personal identity. The four parts of Marius are interrelated, illustrating this need for the synthesis of 'relative' and 'absolute'. Part I concerns the 'absolute' values of traditional religious forms, the 'religion of Numa'. Marius is looking for a mythology, or system, which will be true to the impressions of his independent consciousness. After Flavian's death, he reacts, away from the authority of 'system', until in Part II 'intelligence' becomes the keynote of his search. He gives up 'systems', and reason becomes the sole basis of his analysis of experience. Yet, although he has given up the search for the 'absolute' in favour of the 'relative', Marius retains his longing for the Unseen, his metaphysical longings being supported by the awareness that pure philosophy cannot explain, or deal with, the world's evil. Part III is an exposition of the pagan world's attempts to reconcile 'absolute' and 'relative', through Fronto's discourse. Fronto explains how the rational man can blend his individual appraisal of the immediate situation with an acceptance of 'received morality'. He shows that awareness of a traditional

past sanctifies the present, making 'a select communion of just men made perfect'.[148] But Marius sees that this is merely a variation on an inadequate philosophical approach to the realities of experience. He wants tangible reality: 'But where might Marius search for all this, as more than an intellectual abstraction?'[149] In Part III, Marius is increasingly aware of a divine companion, an 'eternal friend to man', the perfecter of sense experience and thought. Part IV continues this awareness of divine companionship to a 'Christian' conclusion. In the perfection of Christian ritual, Absolute and Relative are reconciled. The old culture is absorbed into a new synthesis, but individual awareness remains the basis of religious judgement. Ritual can express the totality of human experience: it is a means of coming to terms with the traditions of the past, and of expressing the longings of past and present in tangible form. Pater sees the eclectic nature of Christian ritual. The Church:

> was rapidly reorganising both pagan and Jewish elements of ritual, for the expanding therein of her new heart of devotion ... Already ... the Church of the 'Minor Peace' had adopted many of the graces of pagan feeling and pagan custom ... In this way an obscure synagogue was expanded into the catholic church.[150]

Thus, ritual has purpose, other than the self-indulgent fulfilment of personal emotional needs.

148. Marius II, p.10.
149. Marius II, p.12.
150. Marius II, p.124.

And Pater does see beyond the elaboration of ritual, to human need. In Marius, we are conscious of his awareness of human and animal suffering. Sometimes, however, it is difficult to be sure whether his concern is for the suffering itself, or for the unattractive scenes that the suffering produces. One instance is the sacrifice depicted in the opening chapter:

> One thing only distracted him - a certain pity at the bottom of his heart, and almost on his lips, for the sacrificial victims and their looks of terror, rising almost to disgust at the central act of the sacrifice itself, a piece of everyday butcher's work, such as we decorously hide out of sight.[151]

Elsewhere, however, there seems to be genuine sympathetic concern. Marius is outraged by the scenes in the amphitheatre - he feels that to tolerate evil is to be responsible for it. He is conscious of the conflict of good and evil, in a way that Marcus Aurelius is not. Evil is a vigorous force that demands action; though Marius is aware of the 'moral beauty' of Marcus Aurelius's ideas, he finds his philosophy ultimately deficient because it enables him to sit 'essentially unconcerned' at the public displays of barbarity. To be fully human demands action against any degredation of other human beings: 'Surely, evil is a real thing, and the wise man wanting in the sense of it, where, not to have been, by election on the right side, was to have failed in life'.[152]

151. Marius I, p.9.
152. Marius I, p.242.

The successful life, then, is not merely perfection of sensation, but personal moral choice. Marius's sensitivity to the suffering around him makes him determined 'to add nothing, not so much as a transient sigh, to the great total of men's unhappiness'.[153] He is conscious of human dignity, aware that 'to be but sensient is to possess rights'.[154] It is the Church's immediate concern for 'the dignity of man's entire personal being',[155] for his welfare in death as well as in life, which is immediately attractive to Marius. Pater, through Marius, presents his consciousness of human interdependence 'the only principle, perhaps, to which we may always safely trust is a ready sympathy with the pain one actually sees'.[156] The Church embodies compassionate involvement, and attempts to overcome individual isolation.

153. Marius I, p.156.
154. Marius II, p.8.
155. Marius II, p.122.
156. Marius II, p.183.

Chapter III

I propose to discuss, in this chapter, into what form Pater 'recast religion'.[1] We have already seen that, while intending Marius to show 'the necessity of religion',[2] this religion, for Pater, is far from being orthodox Christianity. Pater is dealing, not with dogmatic assertions, nor with doctrine, but with 'possibilities', claiming merely a tentative 'consciousness of some profound enigma in things, as but a pledge of something further to come'.[3] As Graham Hough points out: 'He permits himself to express wishes, leanings, preferences; but not judgements'.[4] His scepticism leads him to a rejection of the dogma of traditional, received religious belief, of Absolute values embodied in orthodox religious faith, and to a concentration on the individual's evaluation of immediate experience, the 'relative' approach to life. Yet he is unable to escape from the emotional, and anthropological, necessity of 'Absolute' values, and attempts a reconciliation of 'Absolute' and 'relative', trying to formulate 'a religious phase possible for the modern mind'.[5] This involves basing his evaluation of the Divine on the individual's sense impressions, so that his pilgrim, Marius, can still be,

1. Matthew Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p.xi.
2. Wright II., p.87.
3. Marius II., p.220.
4. Hough, The Last Romantics (London, 1947), p.160.
5. Letters p.52. 22 July 1883.

in a seemingly religious way, a 'seer', but a seer of a 'revelation in colour and form'.[6]

Sense experience, then, is the basis of Marius, and, although Marius may seem to be on a spiritual journey, in his search for 'perfection',[7] perfection is, in fact, the perfecting of sense experience. The end for which Marius is striving is personal self-cultivation, through sense experience, and it is this 'culture' that, for Pater, replaces orthodox religious belief. Marius is humanist in outlook, concerned more with the perfection of man than with the search for God. The perfected self has become an ethical standard, Pater's response to the crumbling away of the old orthodoxies of belief, now discredited, which maintained the old standards and patterns of behaviour. Pater acts as a 'dissolvent' of the old orthodoxies, in a way defined by Arnold in his Essays in Criticism.[8] In his essay on Heine,[9] Arnold describes the way in which the old morality and religious tenets no longer corresponded with individual experience:

> Modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules, which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward; yet they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it by no means corresponds

6. Marius I, p.54.
7. Marius II, p.27.
8. Arnold, Essays in Criticism (London, 1865).
9. This essay first appeared in the Cornhill Magazine, 8 (August 1863) p. 233-249.

> exactly with the wants of their actual life, that, for them, it is customary, not rational.[10]

Arnold calls the awareness of this discrepancy between received traditions, and personal experience, the awakening of the 'modern spirit'. This modern spirit, which he sees 'almost everywhere', is an awareness of the 'want of correspondence between the forms of Modern Europe and its spirit'. Not only is this discrepancy noted, but the recognition of it is becoming almost commonplace, 'people are even beginning to be shy of denying it'. Arnold calls upon people of 'good sense' to remove this 'want of correspondence':

> Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas we all must be, all of us who have any power of working; what we have to study is that we may not be acrid dissolvents of it.

Arnold's awareness of the conflict between inherited values and individual experience is shared by Pater. In Marius the inherited values are embodied in the religion of Numa, and the speculations of the individual consciousness are thrown into relief against the unconsidered pieties of the old religion, in which, as Hough points out, we are surely meant to hear 'an echo of the decorous scrupulous Anglicanism of Pater's boyhood'.[11]

> The persons about him, certainly, had never been challenged by those prayers and ceremonies to any ponderings on the divine nature; they conceived them rather to be

10. Arnold, Essays in Criticism: 1st Series, p.174.
11. Hough, p.148.

> the appointed means of setting such troublesome movements at rest ... By them, 'the religion of Numa', so staid, ideal and comely, the object of so much jealous conservatism, though of direct service as lending sanction to a sort of high scrupulosity, especially in the chief points of domestic conduct, was mainly prized as being, through its hereditary character, something like a personal distinction ... But in the young Marius, the very absence from those venerable usages of all definite history and dogmatic interpretation, had already awakened much speculative activity.[12]

For Marius, there is direct choice between the old orthodoxies and personal experience:

> For Marius, the only possible dilemma lay between that old ancestral Roman religion, now become so incredible to him and the honest action of his own untroubled unassisted intelligence.[13]

Once the authority of the old orthodoxies is shaken, the individual becomes the only standard of judgement. Arnold describes this process in his Preface to the 1865 Edition of the Essays in Criticism:

> In an epoch of dissolution and transformation, such as that on which we are now entered, habits, ties and associations are inevitably broken up, the action of individuals becomes more distinct, the shortcomings, errors, heats, disputes, which necessarily attend individual action are brought into greater prominence.[14]

Pater, sharing Arnold's view of the problem, also shares his solution, and, faced with the 'lack of correspondence' between the traditional values of the past, and individual experience, comes down on the side of the primacy of personal judgement.

12. Marius I, p.9.
13. Marius I, p.125.
14. Essays in Criticism, p.viii.

Pater's ideal, as it is expressed in Marius, is individual perfection, a perfection attained, not through the revelation of Divine Grace, but through 'culture'; 'the harmonious development of all parts of human nature, in just proportion to each other'.[15] Religion has its place in such a development, because it is emotionally and anthropologically necessary, and therefore part of the 'total' nature of man. But religion is just part of man's development, the end of which is an awareness, on the part of the cultivated individual perception, of the full complexity of his every experience, in its totality. Pater's conception of 'culture' is born of his awareness of the fleeting nature of experience and of human isolation. He discusses these most fully in his 'Conclusion' to Studies in the History of the Renaissance. Given the incommunicable, transient and unique nature of every experience, then the individual's only defence against the 'flood of external objects',[16] which constitutes experience, is an ability to enter fully into every experience, to recognise and grasp it on its own terms:

> The service of philosophy, and of religion and culture as well, to the human spirit, is to startle it into a sharp and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistably real and attractive for us, - for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end.[17]

15. Marius II, p.121.
16. Studies in the History of the Renaissance (London, 1873), p.208.
17. Ibid. p.210.

'Culture', for Pater, leads to this ability to experience every moment in its totality, not seeking to relate it to any philosophic or religious theory.

Throughout Marius Pater attempts to define what he means by 'culture', but this comes out, not so much in these definitions, which remain vague and generalised in terminology, but through the way in which the idea of culture affects the plot of the novel. The implications of culture are more significant than the definitions.

For Pater, 'culture' is a many sided development, a recognition of the complexity of the human personality, where each part of the personality is reconciled with the others, with no sacrifice of any of the diversity possible to man. Pater contrasts the ideal of asceticism with this ideal of culture, in order to bring out this 'total' nature of culture:

> The ideal of asceticism represents moral efforts as essentially a sacrifice, the sacrifice of one part of human nature to another, that it may live the more completely in what survives of it; while the ideal of culture represents it as a harmonious development of all parts of human nature in just proportion to each other. It was to the latter order of ideas that the Church of Rome in the Age of the Antonines, freely lent herself.[18]

Culture maintains the necessity of 'completion' - 'not pleasure but a general completeness of life'[19] is Marius's ideal.

18. Marius II, p.121.
19. Marius I, p.142.

Nothing can be sacrificed: 'culture' must involve a receptivity to all experience, a complete open-mindedness which rejects nothing which may increase the individual's awareness of experience. Culture thus demands a kind of morality, a refusal to judge or dogmatise, a refusal to take sides. In fact, a 'moral sexlessness, a kind of impotence' to which Pater referred earlier, in his essay Diaphaneité.[20] He stresses the detached and morally uncommitted nature of culture:

> Liberty of soul, freedom from all partial and misrepresentative doctrine which does but relieve one element in our experience at the cost of another, freedom from all embarrassment alike of regret for the past and calculation for the future: this world would be but preliminary to the real business of education -- insight, insight through culture, into all that the present holds in trust for us, as we stand so briefly in its presence.[21]

In this passage, as elsewhere, Pater associates culture with education. Culture is the product of 'a complete education',[22] of 'a wide, a complete education ... directed especially to the expansion and refinement of the power of reception; of those powers, above all, which are immediately relative to fleeting phenomena, the powers of emotion and sense'.[23]

His maintenance of the all-inclusive ideal of culture causes Marius to reject the apparently limited philosophies of Stoicism and Cyrenaicism. His disapproval of the Emperor

20. Miscellaneous Studies, p.253.
21. Marius I, p.142.
22. Marius I, p.145.
23. Marius I, p.147.

Marcus Aurelius is based on a belief that Aurelius has sacrificed one part of his potential development to his insistence on the Rational:

> It was hardly an expression of 'the healthy mind in the healthy body', but rather a sacrifice of the body to the soul, its needs and aspirations, that Marius seemed to divine in this assiduous student of the Greek sages - a sacrifice, in truth, far beyond the demands of their very saddest philosophy of life.[24]

The result of this imbalance is death, and as Aurelius speaks, Marius is filled with an awareness of desolation and decay. Aurelius's discourse is on the vanity of the world, and on the need for renunciation:

> And though the impression of the actual greatness of Rome on that day was but enhanced by the strain of contempt, falling with an accent of pathetic conviction from the emperor himself, and gaining from his pontifical pretensions the authority of a religious intimation, yet the curious interest of the discourse lay in this, that Marius, for one, as he listened, seemed to forsee a grass-grown Forum, the broken ways of the Capitol, and the Palatine hill itself in humble occupation.[25]

Similarly, his rejection of Cyrenaïcism springs from his awareness of its limited and narrow nature:

> The spectacle of their fierce, exclusive, tenacious hold on their own narrow apprehension, makes one think of a picture with no relief, no soft shadows nor breadth of space, or of a drama without proportionate repose.[26]

This is directly opposed to the ideal of culture, with its emphasis on disinterestedness, and refusal to cling tenaciously to dogma. It is clear, therefore, that this ideal is in direct

24. Marius I, p.191.
25. Marius I, p.200.
26. Marius II, p.23.

opposition to the ideal of religious belief, whose essence is commitment. As the New Catholic Encyclopedia points out, in its attempt to define 'religion':

> Every religion implies a choice that is so total and exclusive, affecting as it does the personal destiny of every human being in irrevocable fashion even where no clear notion of a transcendent absolute exists, that no religion seems able to tolerate its inclusion in the cadre of a general definition.[27]

It is this very exclusivity of definition that is so incompatible with the Paterian idea of culture. Hence, Marius is unable to commit himself to Christianity, even though he recognises the 'totality' of the early Church, which is a 'veritable regeneration of the earth and the body, in the dignity of man's entire personal being'.[28] For commitment involves limitation, a cutting down of possibilities, and this would seem to be directly opposed to Pater's hope of 'affording full fruition to the entire nature of man'.[29] The Conclusion to Studies in the History of the Renaissance sheds further light on the movement away from commitment, and shows that commitment is never among Pater's ideals. Experience for its own sake is enough; Pater seeks no connection between one experience and the next, in any moral or philosophic system:

> With this sense of the splendour of our experience, and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch.

27. New Catholic Encyclopedia 12, p.240.
28. Marius II, p.122.
29. Marius II, p.57.

> What we have to do is to be for ever testing new opinions and counting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte or Hegel, or of our own. Theories, religious or philosophical ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. La philosophie, c'est la microscope de la pensée. The theory, or idea, or system, which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract morality we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.[30]

Pater's ideal is thus a freedom from system, and a detachment from 'theory' which makes Conventional belief impossible. This explains why Marius is always a 'spectator', never actually involved in the situations he describes. He remains on the outside, in disinterested contemplation. He watches the religious ceremonies of the pagan world:

> But in the young Marius, the very absence from those venerable usages of all definite history and dogmatic interpretation, had already awakened much speculative activity; and today, starting from the actual details of the divine service, some very lively surmises, though scarcely distinct enough to be thoughts, were moving backwards and forwards in his mind, as the stirring wind had done all day among the trees, and were like the passing of some mysterious influence over all the elements of his nature and experience.[31]

Closely connected with this idea of the necessity of detachment is Pater's concept of individual isolation discussed in the previous chapter.[32] This isolation is summed up at the end of Chapter I of Marius, The Religion of Numa, as Marius retires to his room 'that he might the better recall in

30. Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1st ed.) p.211.
31. Marius I, p.9.
32. Marius I, p.11.

reverie all the circumstances of the day'. He awakes during a storm:

> The thunder which startled him from sleep seemed to make the solitude of his chamber almost painfully complete, as if the nearness of those angry clouds shut him up in a close place alone in the world.[33]

Here, 'in a close place alone in the world' is the essence of the Paterian conception of personal isolation. The idea of 'culture', with its emphasis on personal development and self-fulfilment, increases the emphasis on the individual, until the isolated consciousness becomes the measure of all things, and defines the limits of its own world. The world of Marius is limited by Marius's perception: we see nothing that is not refracted through his personality. The book's subtitle is His Sensations and Ideas: events, in themselves, are unimportant. This leads to deficiencies on the level of plot. As, for instance, Marius gradually loses his sense of the importance of the actual, concentrating more and more on the introspective workings of his own mind:

> It was as if he viewed (the world) through a diminishing glass. And the permanency of this change he could note, some years later, when it happened that he was a guest at a feast.[34]

Casually, years have passed, unaccounted for and apparently irrelevant.

33. Marius I, p.12
34. Marius II, p.76.

The cultivation of the isolated individual consciousness is a movement on Pater's part against abstraction and metaphysical speculation. The individual consciousness is shown developing in response to sensory stimuli, and, for Pater, perfection is attainable through the refinement of sense experience. Pater shows clearly his opposition to abstraction in the Preface to Studies in the History of the Renaissance, where he is discussing the possibilities of defining 'beauty'. He concludes that beauty is relative, and that:

> the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty not in the most abstract, but in the most concrete terms possible, not to find a universal formula for it, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.[35]

Marius's life is, in a sense, a work of art. His development comes through his experience of the concrete and tangible. As Hough says of Pater:

> He attaches very little importance to formal intellectual beliefs and inclines to test all these matters by their visible and sensible expression.[36]

Marius's reliance on the immediate is depicted as 'an anti-metaphysic metaphysic'.[37] He holds 'by what his eyes really saw',[38] for 'all influence reached Marius ... through the medium of sense'.[39]

35. Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), p.vii.
36. Hough, p.154.
37. Marius I, p.142.
38. Marius II, p.90.
39. Marius II, p.233.

The dangers inherent in such reliance on 'perfected' sense experience are evident in Marius. It leads to a search for the bizarre, the exotic, the macabre. We saw this in the Conclusion of The Renaissance:

> Where all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to the knowledge that seems, by a lifted horizon, to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers and curious odours.[40]

The thirst for the refinement of experience has led to an almost perverse search for the exotic. This occurs in Marius where Marius's longing for 'the real, the greater experience'[41] finds its expression as 'a thirst for existence in exquisite places'. The practical outcome of a concept of 'culture' which admits all experience, in its search for perfection, is a concentration on the bizarre.

Yet Pater's ideal of culture as 'a harmonious development of all the parts of human nature'[42] has something in common with religious ideals, concerned as it is with perfection. And here it is true to say, with Eliot[43] that Pater, like Arnold, substituted culture for conventional religion. Eliot claims that 'the degredation of philosophy and religion, skilfully initiated by Arnold, is competently continued by Pater'.[44]

40. Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), p.211.
41. Marius I, p.157.
42. Marius II, p.121.
43. T.S. Eliot, 'Arnold and Pater', Selected Essays 1917-1932 (Faber, 1932). p.279-291.
44. Ibid. p.385.

In considering Pater's views on culture and religion, it is necessary to consider the extent of his debt to Arnold. There have been several studies of this debt, particularly in Delaura's book Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England, which considers the interrelation of Arnold, Pater and Newman.[45] As he says:

> Arnold is surprisingly often at the basis of Pater's most important statements concerning art, religion, and the problems of modern life.[46]

Pointing out the profundity and extent of Pater's debt to Arnold, he comments that 'the extraordinary extent and significance of the influence, even at the verbal level, has never been documented'.[47] I propose to attempt some analysis of this influence, in particular, as it affects Marius.

Pater sent up to Oxford in October 1858,[48] when Arnold had been Professor of Poetry for over a year. (He had been elected on 5 May, 1857, and had delivered his inaugural lecture on the Modern Element in Literature on 14 November, in the Sheldonian Theatre[49]). Wright records how Pater and his friend Moorhouse went eagerly to hear Arnold's lectures on poetry,[50] and enjoyed 'both the lecturer's "impudence" (or invincible

45. D. Delaura, Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England (University of Texas, 1969).
46. Ibid. p.170.
47. Ibid. p.192.
48. Wright I, p.145.
49. R.H. Super (ed.), Matthew Arnold on the Classical Tradition (Ann Arbor, 1960), p.225.
50. Wright I, p.173.

insouciance as Arnold himself called it) and his onslaught on the Philistines'. He continues:

> We presently find Pater adding to his Olympus, which had previously been occupied only by Wordsworth, Arnold's two other great gods: Goethe and Senancour, while he studied more than ever his large copy of Wordsworth, and read it in his eyrie aloud, and with feeling ... The aims of Pater, henceforward, bore some resemblance to those of Arnold, but while Arnold stood for 'sweetness and light', Pater advocated 'sweetness and shade' - the dim, the dusky, the subdued.

We cannot know which of Arnold's lectures Pater attended in Oxford, nor the precise content of these lectures. The Ann Arbour edition of Arnold's works, published by the University of Texas, tries to define the contents of the Oxford lectures. It says[51] that Arnold intended his first lecture on the Modern Element in Literature to be the first of a course, the whole of which he intended to collect and publish as a book. None of the titles of this first series of lectures has survived. The second lecture was delivered on 8 May, 1858, and the third on 29 May. The fourth, delivered on 4 December, was mainly on feudalism, and on scholastic philosophy. At that time, Arnold intended to devote his fifth lecture, to be delivered on 12 March, 1859, to "Dante, the troubadours and the early drama", and "to examine what is called the 'romantic' sentiment about women", which the Germans quite falsely are fond of giving themselves the credit of originating. The sixth lecture was given on 19 May, and of that, nothing is known. Only the

51. R.H. Super, p.225.

inaugural lecture was published,[52] and in the Preface to the first printing of this, Arnold writes:

> It was meant to be followed and completed by a course of lectures developing the subject entirely, and some of these were given. But the course was broken off because I found my knowledge insufficient for treating in a solid way many portions of the subject chosen. The inaugural lecture, however, treating a portion of the subject where my knowledge was perhaps less insufficient, and where besides my hearers were better able to help themselves out from their own knowledge, is here printed.[53]

As well as this series of lectures, Arnold also delivered a course on the translation of Homer, during the time that Pater was an Oxford undergraduate. As he wrote to his mother on 29 October, 1860:

> I am in full work at my lectures on Homer, which you have seen advertised in the Times. I give it next Saturday. I shall try to lay down the true principles on which a translation of Homer should be founded, and I shall give a few passages translated by myself to add practise to theory. This is an off lecture, given partly because I have long had in my mind something to say about Homer, partly because of the complaints that I did not enough lecture on poetry. I shall still give the lecture, continuing my proper course towards the end of term.[54]

The first three lectures were delivered on 3 November, 1860, 8 December, 1860 and 26 January, 1861, and were printed by Longmans in 1861. A fourth lecture, On Translating Homer: Last Words, was given in Oxford on 30 November, 1861.

I have already examined, in a previous chapter, Pater's debt to Arnold in his choice of setting for Marius, and

52. In MM, 19, p.304-314.
53. MM, 19, p.304.
54. Letters of Matthew Arnold, p.166. in Works of Matthew Arnold, (Macmillan 1903)

Arnold's influence on Pater's proposed trilogy of novels.[55] As Delaura says: 'There is no other author whose phrases, ideas, arguments and attitudes so completely saturate Pater's writings at all stages as do Arnold's, and the apparent echoes illuminate as much by contrast as by likeness'.[56] It is this 'saturation' which I now propose to discuss.

We have seen that the key words in Pater's definition of 'culture' are 'entirety', 'completeness' and 'harmonious development'. His ideal is the perfection of man through culture. We see Marius yearning 'towards the most perfect forms of life':[57] he has come to Rome seeking a 'vision of perfect men and things'.[58] Pater's closeness to Arnold can be seen by an examination of Arnold's definitions of culture. For him, culture is 'a pursuit of our total perfection'.[59] It is 'the study of perfection',[60] 'the disinterested endeavour after man's perfection'.[61] 'Perfection', for Arnold, is 'harmonious',[62] 'developing all sides of our humanity',[63] Harmonious perfection is to be won only by 'unreservedly cultivating many sides in us'.[64] It is 'harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature,

55. See p.14.
56. Delaura, p.xvi.
57. Marius I, p.147.
58. Marius I, p.148.
59. Culture and Anarchy, p.(xi).
60. Ibid. p.xiv.
61. Ibid. p.xxxvii.
62. Ibid. p.xiv.
63. Ibid. p.xiv.
64. Ibid. p.xxvii.

and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest'.[65] For Arnold, as for Pater, 'culture' has the weight and authority of a religious ideal, while being greater than religion. For religion is essentially partisan, involving a definite commitment, while 'culture' maintains an ideal of detachment and disinterestedness. Arnold uses religious terminology in his definition of 'culture'. He sees culture as being concerned with 'salvation'.[66] Puritans, clinging tenaciously to their own version of truth are 'falling short of harmonious perfection', and therefore 'fail to follow the true way of salvation'.[67] There are 'preachers' of culture,[68] men of culture are 'the true apostles of equality'.[69] In Pater, we find a similar transference of religious terminology to define culture. Ideally, he postulates; 'culture would be realisable as a new form of the contemplative life, founding its claim on the intrinsic "blessedness" of "vision" - the vision of perfect man and things'.[70] The propagation of culture is described as a 'ministry'.[71]

The implications and practical effects of 'culture', both in Arnold and Pater, are more important than their definitions.

65. Culture and Anarchy, p.6.
66. Ibid. p.xxvii
67. Ibid. p.xv.
68. Ibid. p.14.
69. Ibid. p.43.
70. Marius I, p.148.
71. Marius II, p.38.

In defining culture, Arnold uses rhetoric and repetition as a substitute for argument and precision. His insistence that 'culture is the pursuit of total perfection',[72] for instance, begs the question of the exact meaning of such nebulous and vague terminology. Arnold's standpoint becomes clearer, however, when we examine the practical effects of holding such a concept as 'harmonious perfection' or the necessity of cultivating '<u>all</u> the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature'.[73] For to be concerned always with 'getting to know, on all the matters which might concern us, the best that has been thought and said in the world',[74] in order 'to develop all sides of our humanity'[75] implies the kind of anti-dogmatic approach we have already seen and traced in Pater, an approach which eliminates commitment and makes formal religious belief impossible. We can see in Arnold the beginning of that detachment and avoidance of dogma so pronounced in Pater.

Arnold's reluctance to commit himself springs from his awareness of the inadequacies and limitations of the 'systems' which he saw in operation in Victorian England. He saw parties and sects who, devoid of an coherent social ideals, 'did as they pleased', pressing forward with isolated reforms and doctrines until these doctrines became ends in themselves, having

72. <u>Culture and Anarchy</u>, p.xi.
73. Ibid. p.12.
74. Ibid. p.xi.
75. Ibid. p.xiv.

no relation to any total view of society. In Culture and Anarchy, he challenges the fanaticism of the believers in 'machinery', those who, becoming so obsessed with one particular party issue, be it the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, or the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill, fail to see past it to any total view of the kind of society they are producing. When he calls for 'spontaneity of consciousness', of the ability to 'turn a stream of free and fresh thought upon our stock notions and habits',[76] he is demanding, not detachment leading to indifference, but detachment from obsessive and fanatical involvement in particular issues, which obscure wider social implications. For he sees how belief in 'machinery', or in 'action' for its own sake, has produced a society which is materially and industrially prosperous, but spiritually bankrupt. The systems of industrialised England have produced a society which measures prosperity in terms of railways or coalmines, but which allows children to be 'eaten up with disease, half-sized, half-fed, half-clothed, neglected by their parents, without health, without home, without hope'.[77] Culture maintains an ideal beyond the ends attainable by systems, 'and thus culture begets a dissatisfaction which is of the highest possible value in stemming the common tide of men's thoughts in a wealthy and industrial community, and which saves the future, as one may hope, from being vulgarised,

76. Culture and Anarchy, p.xi.
77. Ibid. p.207.

even if it cannot save the present'.[78]

Arnold's sceptical view of the efficiency of 'systems' leads him to place the weight of his emphasis on the individual, an emphasis which Pater shares and extends. Culture 'places human perfection in an internal condition':[79] it is 'an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances',[80] and 'looks to an inward ripeness for the true springs of conduct'.[81] Again, this idea of the necessity of inward development, and personal responsibility is Arnold's reaction to an increasingly mechanised and industrialised society:

> The idea of perfection as an inward condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with the mechanical and material civilisation in esteem with us, and nowhere, as I have said, so much in esteem as with us.[82]

Pater, sharing Arnold's view of the importance of the individual, goes on to develop this, until the perfected self becomes a standard of judgement. For Arnold, 'the individual must act for himself, and must be perfect in himself',[83] for only then is any standard of Authority established. Moving, then, beyond the individual, and maintaining the necessity of Authority, Arnold finds it in the State, based on perfected individuals:

78. Culture and Anarchy, p.17.
79. Ibid. p.9.
80. Ibid. p.12.
81. Ibid. p.xvii.
82. Ibid. p.13.
83. Ibid. p.117.

> We want authority, and we find nothing but jealous classes, checks, and a deadlock; Culture suggests the idea of the State. We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one in our best self.[84]

Although he wants Authority, yet Arnold becomes increasingly sceptical as he sees the deficiencies in the dogma and doctrine. He adopts a 'relative', tentative approach which is also seen in Pater. In philosophical judgements, there can be no absolutes, and therefore no dogmatic pronouncements:

> There is no surer proof of a narrow and ill-constructed mind than to think and uphold that what a man takes to be the truth on religious matters is always to be proclaimed. Our truth on these matters, and likewise the error of others, is something so relative that the good or harm likely to be done by speaking ought always to be taken into account.[85]

He stresses the relativity of truth in his Preface to the 1865 edition of the Essays in Criticism:

> To try and approach truth on one side after another, not to strive or cry, nor to persist in pressing forward, on any one side, with violence and self will, - it is only thus, it seems to me, that mortals may hope to gain any vision of the mysterious Goddess, whom we shall never see except in outline, but only thus even in outline. He who will do nothing but fight impetuously towards her on his own, favourite particular line, is inevitably destined to run his head into the folds of the black robe in which she is wrapped.[86]

Given this concept of the relativity of truth, and the rejection of 'systems', it is not surprising that Arnold should ultimately base his ideas of authority on matters of religious belief on personal experience and individual perception.

84. Culture and Anarchy, p.76.
85. Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p.v.
86. Arnold, Essays in Criticism, p.v-vi.

This comes out most clearly in Literature and Dogma (1873) where Arnold attacks metaphysics and speculation, trying 'to find, for the Bible, a basis in something which can be verified, instead of in something which has to be assumed'.[87] His scepticism has forced him to reject anything which cannot be proven in a tangible way:

> We give to the Bible a real experimental basis, and keep on this basis throughout; instead of any basis of unverifiable assumption to start with, followed by a string of other unverifiable assumptions of the like kind such as the received theology necessitates.[88]

He rejects speculative religion:

> We see every day that the making religion into metaphysics is the weakening of religion.[89]

He takes issue with theology and religious theory, writing of Jesus:

> Here is what characterises his teaching and distinguishes him, for instance, from the author of the Fourth Gospel. This author handles what we may call theosophical speculation in a beautiful and impressive manner; the introduction to his Gospel is undoubtedly in a very noble and profound strain. But it is theory, an intellectual theory of the divine nature and the system of things, which was then, and still is at present, utterly irreducible to experience. And therefore it is impossible even to conceive Jesus himself uttering the Introduction to the Fourth Gospel; because theory Jesus never touches, but bases himself invariably on experience. True, the experience must, for philosophy, have its place in a theory of the system of human nature, when the theory is perfect; but the point is, that the experience is ripe and solid, and to be used safely, long before the theory. And it was the experience which Jesus always used.[90]

87. Literature and Dogma, p.x.
88. Ibid. p.xii.
89. Ibid. p.121.
90. Ibid. p.209.

Arnold, clearly, mistrusts theory, and accepts only the 'practical and experimental'.[91] He takes 'what is experimentally true, and nothing else'.[92] Again, individual experience is all-important, 'all this points to inward appraisal, the method of inwardness, the individual conscience'.[93] For Arnold, the definition of the Divine cannot go beyond the experience of the individual:

> Therefore we must not attempt to define God adequately, or in a way that goes beyond our experience, - to say like our theologians: God is a person - but we define God approximately, according to our actual experience of him.[94]

Arnold never defines what this 'experience' is, and though Pater's emphasis on sense experience as the basis of all judgement is a continuation of Arnold's 'experimental' outlook, in fact Pater is more precise and honest about his awareness of the Divine. Marius's experience of God is 'a revelation in colour and form'[95] - 'he must still hold by what his eyes really saw'.[96] Pater makes clear in Marius the practical results of Arnold's instance on 'experimental truth':

> He was ready now to concede, somewhat more easily than others, the first point of his new lesson, that the individual is to himself the measure of all things, and to rely on the exclusive certainty to himself of his own impressions.[97]

91. Literature and Dogma, p.304.
92. Ibid. p.379.
93. Ibid. p.258.
94. Ibid. p.267.
95. Marius I, p.54.
96. Marius II, p.90.
97. Marius I, p.133.

Pater takes further Arnold's emphasis on verification through experience.

Despite this emphasis on the individual, and the rejection of systems, both Arnold and Pater show considerable social concern. Arnold shows that concern for 'culture' must involve social concern too. Culture is not merely individual perfection, but 'general perfection, developing all parts of our society'.[98] In fact:

> Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated.[99]

Social responsibility and culture are intrinsically combined, for, though he stresses the internal, personal nature of perfection, Arnold sees Culture as essentially a socially active force. As Raymond Williams says: 'Culture is right knowing and right doing; a process and not an absolute'.[100]

> There is a view in which all the love of our neighbour, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it - motives eminently such as are called social - come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and pre-eminent part.[101]

For though culture demands disinterestedness, its main obligation and function is positive expression of social involvement:

98. Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p.xiv.
99. Ibid. p.12.
100. Williams, Culture and Society (Pelican, 1963), p.134.
101. Culture and Anarchy, p.7.

> The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward.[102]

As T. S. Eliot points out, it is this social concern, rather than its abstract definitions of 'culture' which gives Culture and Anarchy its force:

> Culture stands out against a background to which it is contrasted, a background of definite terms of ignorance, vulgarity and prejudice.[103]

The social concern is localised and positive:

> So all our fellow-men, in the East of London and elsewhere, we must take along with us in the progress towards perfection, if we ourselves really, as we profess, want to be perfect.[104]

It is urgent and impassioned, pleading the cause of:

> those vast, miserable unmanageable masses of sunken people, to the existence of which we are, as we have seen, absolutely forbidden to reconcile ourselves, in spite of all that the philosophy of the Times and the poetry of Mr. Robert Buchanan may say to persuade us.[105]

He uses his rhetoric to bring the full force of his concern home to the reader, as he writes of 'children eaten up with disease, half-sized, half-fed, half-clothed, neglected by their parents, without health, without home, without hope'.[106]

Pater shares some of this humanitarian concern. Marius is horrified by the cruelty of the amphitheatre, and is shocked

102. Culture and Anarchy, p.12.
103. Eliot, 'Arnold and Pater', p.380.
104. Culture and Anarchy, p.205.
105. Ibid. p.205.
106. Ibid. p.207.

by Marcus Aurelius's acceptance of it:

> In spite of the moral beauty of the philosophic emperor's ideas, how he had sat, essentially unconcerned, at the public shows.[107]

Although it is possible to claim that Pater's concern is more for the unattractiveness of the scene in the amphitheatre, than for its moral wrongness, yet he does have some sympathetic awareness of the needs of others:

> And what we need in the world .... Is a certain permanent and general power of compassion - humanity's standing force of self-pity as an elementary ingredient of our social atmosphere, if we are to live in it at all.[108]

Yet Pater remains much more with the individual than does Arnold. Arnold denounces social injustice with an essentially public voice: he is the orator and sage, the campaigner. Pater is much more tentative, remaining within the individual consciousness, and dealing with the problem of suffering on a personal, undogmatic, level. The difference between them comes out clearly when we compare Arnold's consideration of social ideals with Pater's:

> ... let us judge the religious organisations which we see all around us. Do not let us deny the good and the happiness which they have accomplished, but do not let us fail to see clearly that their idea of human perfection is narrow and inadequate, and that the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion will never bring humanity to its true goal. As I said with regard to wealth: Let us look at the life of those who live in and for it, - so I say with regard

107. Marius II, p.57.
108. Marius II, p.182.

> to the religious organisations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the Nonconformist, - a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of Chapels, sermons; and then think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light and perfection.[109]

This passage from Culture and Anarchy is rousing and exhortative, identifying Arnold with his readers in a corporate concern by speaking of 'us' and 'we'. It is positive and assertive. It deals with large, general truths - 'do not let us deny ...' and is dogmatic - 'let us judge'. Compare with this a passage from Marius, 'Sunt Lacrimae Rerum', where Marius is considering what solution, if any, there is to the problem of human suffering. Marius has previously been watching two children at play, one of whom is crippled:

> At all events, the actual conditions of our life being as they are, and the capacity for suffering so large a principle in things - since the only principle, perhaps, to which we may always safely trust is a ready sympathy with the pain one actually sees - it follows that the practical and effective difference between men will lie in their power of insight into those conditions, their power of sympathy. The future will be with those who have most of it; while for the present, as I persuade muself, those who have much of it have something to hold by, even in the dissolution of a world, or in that dissolution of self, which is, for everyone no less than the dissolution of the world it represents for him.[110]

The difference between Arnold's rhetorical, and Pater's tentatively exploratory prose style is immediately apparent. Significantly the tentative deductions which Marius makes are in the form of a diary, and therefore lack even the

109. Culture and Anarchy, p.25.
110. Marius II, p.183.

conclusiveness they would have had if recorded directly by the narrator of the novel. It is an entirely personal conclusion, using 'I', where Arnold spoke of 'we'. It deals with possibilities, and is entirely undogmatic, using 'seem', and 'appear' in place of positive assertion.

For Pater is much more concerned with 'the narrow chamber of the individual mind', than is Arnold. Marius responds to the sufferings of the outside world, but the pivot of the book is Marius's consciousness, in its isolation. Delaura pinpoints the reason for this isolation when he comments that Pater transferred to the moral realm qualities which Arnold required, not of the moral, but of the critical spirit.[111] Arnold required a positive, active, social involvement, when writing of morality. But from the literary critic, he demands complete detachment and inaction. The critic should be divorced from the practical, and should evaluate 'the object as in itself it really is',[112] without moral judgement. In Marius, we see the transfer of this 'critical' approach to problems of ethics and morality.

For Arnold, the essence of criticism is disinterestedness:

> And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things' ... by steadily refusing to lend itself to any

111. Delaura, p.198.
112. Essays in Criticism, p.6.

> of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas ... to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, questions which will never fail to have due prominence given to them.[113]

Throughout his essay on the function of criticism, he constantly stresses the need for detachment:

> I say, the critic must keep out of the region of immediate practice in the social, political, humanitarian sphere, if he wants to make a beginning for that more free speculative treatment of things.[114]

It is a spirit essentially amoral and undogmatic:

> It must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fulness of spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere are maleficent. It must be apt to discern the spiritual shortcomings or illusions of powers that in the practical sphere may be beneficent.[115]

It is Arnold's 'critical' spirit that we see in Marius's speculations. He brings to moral questions a critical outlook intended by Arnold to be directed towards literary problems. Yet even in Arnold some blurring of moral and literary questions has taken place. For although the critic is meant to be detached and remote from moral considerations, yet he is meant to be involved in the essentially moral problem of the nature of human perfection:

113. Essays in Criticism, p.20.
114. Ibid. p.29.
115. Ibid. p.37.

> What will nourish us in the growth towards perfection? That is the question which, with the immense field of life and literature lying before him, the critic has to answer, for himself first, and afterwards for others.[116]

For, although it is true that Pater took Arnold's criticism of literature to make a criticism of life, yet Arnold began the blurring as early as the Essays in Criticism.

116. Essays in Criticism, p.43.

Chapter IV

Pater had seen the writing of Marius as a moral obligation; 'a sort of duty'.[1] In it, he had attempted to show 'that there is a fourth sort of religious phase possible for the modern mind', and at the end of the novel had left Marius participating, despite his lack of commitment, in the liturgy of the Church:

> In his moments of extreme helplessness their mystic bread had been placed, had descended like a snowflake from the sky between his lips.[2]

To the end of his life, Marius has remained a spectator at the pageant of existence. Although Pater claims that his hero is a 'pilgrim', we see at the end of the novel that Marius has seen his life as a work of art, rather than a journey:

> His deeper wisdom had ever been, with a sense of economy, with a jealous estimate of gain and loss, to use life, not as the means to some problematic end, but, as far as might be, from dying hour to dying hour, an end in itself.[3]

In this, Pater's representation of Marius's life is an illustration of his attitude towards the function of art, as expressed in the conclusion of his essay on Wordsworth:

> To treat life in the spirit of art, is to make life a thing in which means and ends are identified: to encourage such treatment, the true moral significance of art and poetry ... Not to teach lessons, or enforce rules, or even to stimulate us to noble ends; but to withdraw the thoughts for a little while from the mere machinery

1. Letters p.52. 22 July 1883.
2. Marius II, p.221.
3. Marius II, p.220.

> of life, to fix them, with appropriate emotions, on the spectacle of those great facts in man's existence which no machinery affects ....[4]

Marius withdraws into the narrow chamber of his individual mind: external events are important in so far as they influence his sensations and ideas, yet he remains essentially isolated from them.

The consequences of this position, both artistic and moral, are not seen clearly until Pater's later work, and it is for this reason that the unfinished Gaston de Latour, intended as the second volume of the proposed trilogy, is important. In a letter to William Canton, assistant Editor of the Contemporary Review, Pater described Gaston as 'a sort of Marius in France, in the sixteenth century'.[5] Gaston was compiled by C. L. Shadwell at the request of Pater's sisters, but, as Evans points out: 'The Prefaces he wrote for Greek Studies, Miscellaneous Studies and Gaston de Latour show almost no first-hand knowledge of his friend's later literary projects and intentions'.[6]

Like Marius, Gaston is set in 'another age of transition, when the old fabric of belief was breaking up and when the problem of man's destiny and his relations to the Unseen was

4. Appreciations, p.62.
5. Letters p.126. 22 January 1892.
6. Ibid. p.65n.

undergoing a new solution'.[7] As in Marius, Pater is concerned with the conflict between 'relative' and 'abstract' modes of thought, a conflict usually expressed in the discrepancy between the two kinds of 'truth' - the 'truth' of the individual's personal experience, where there are no absolutes and where every experience exists solely on its own terms, and the 'truth' embodied in traditional, received Systems where absolute values exist beyond what is 'here and now'. In Marius, Pater tries to reconcile 'received' and 'personal' values, the absolute and the relative. He moves away from the values of the 'System', in this case the traditional 'Religion of Numa' to an epicureanism where sense and intellect become the sole definers of 'truth'. But Pater/Marius never loses the 'religious' yearning, the longing for an Absolute beyond the immediacy of experience. Yet he wants authority without dogma, the assurance of an Unseen world without the necessity of commitment. He continually asserts that Marius's sensory experience remains the basis of his ethical and philosophical judgements; Marius prefers Christianity to his earlier philosophic 'schemes' partly because it is the most 'beautiful' of these schemes. Christianity also fulfils a complex psychological need in Pater/Marius, a need which Pater calls religious, but which is, in fact, an amalgam of a yearning for security, a veneration of 'home' and the feminine values, an urge to escape

7. Gaston de Latour, p.vi.

from the sordid reality of the actual world, a longing for order, and a strange death-longing.

Religion in Gaston is treated in a similar way. But Gaston lacks the organisation and movement forward which was found in Marius. It is episodic and structureless, and it is not surprising that Pater never finished it, as it would be difficult to imagine a satisfactory conclusion. Marius is divided into four parts, each having a definite relation to the other, and as well as this divisional structuring, the novel has an internal cohesion through Pater's use of the image of pilgrimage. Marius is involved in a lifelong search for values, conducting an 'individual mental pilgrimage' towards spiritual perfection. Every experience is seen critically in the light of the possibility of perfection. Gaston is not a critical work in this sense, for its hero is given over entirely to the relative spirit. Pater focuses on the present moment, so that we are unaware of any necessity for movement. For example, the first chapters of Gaston, dealing with his reception into holy orders, and the Church at Chartres, are self-sufficient. Pater glories in the intoxication of present beauty. and nothing beyond that beauty is important:

> A thicket of airy spires rose above the sanctuary; the blind triforium broke into one continuous window; the heavy masses of stone were pared down with wonderful dexterity of hand, till not a hand's-breath remained uncovered by delicate tracery, as from the fair white roof, touched sparingly with gold, down to the subterranean chapel of Saint Taurin, where the peasants of

> La Beauce came to pray for rain, not a space was left unsearched by cheerful daylight, refined, but hardly dimmed at all, by painted glass mimicking the clearness of the open sky ...[8]

Gaston's awareness of the unseen is not so much a psychological necessity as it was in Marius. Montaigne and Ronsard, the exponents of the relative spirit, preoccupied with the immediate, adopt Christianity almost as an insurance against the possibilities of what is 'beyond the veil'. Ronsard asserts 'the latent poetic rights of the transitory, the fugitives, the contingent'.[9] But when Gaston meets him, he is in an ecclesiastical setting, a lay Prior. Montaigne, too, has the best of both worlds. He asserts that 'any common measure of truth is impossible' and sees the individual consciousness as the sole arbiter of reality:

> It was the recognition, over against, or in continuation of, that world of floating doubt, of the individual mind, as for each one severally, at once the unique organ, and the only matter, of knowledge, - the wonderful energy, the reality and authority of that, in its absolute loneliness, conforming all things to its law, without witness, as without judge, without appeal, save to itself.[10]

Yet Montaigne makes a 'pious end', gesturing finally to the Unseen. Having asserted the reality of the here and now, Montaigne bows to 'a certain great possibility which might lie among the conditions of so complex a world'.[11] Pater here verges on the depiction of an attitude described by a rather

8. Gaston, p.6.
9. Ibid. p.57.
10. Ibid. p.105
11. Ibid. p.113.

cynical Anglican hospital chaplain, who commented: 'There are no sick atheists'.[12]

By beginning Gaston's religious development in Catholic Christianity, Pater prevents any possibility of advancement. Christianity is to Gaston what the Religion of Numa was to Marius, and it is difficult to envisage what final point Pater intended to reach with Gaston. As in Marius, Gaston's home takes on religious significance. Representing the stability of family and tradition, it becomes a symbol of permanence - 'a visible record of all the accumulated sense of human existence among its occupants'.[13] There are specifically religious references made to Gaston's home: Gabrielle de Latour's room, for instance, is a shrine:

> Hither, as to an oratory, a religious place, the finer spirits of her kin had always found their way, to leave behind them there the more intimate relics of themselves.[14]

As in Marius, religion, beauty and death are fused. Gaston, too, has an awareness of death, and the macabre, at its centre. Gaston sees:

> The beauty of the world and its sorrow, solaced a little by religious faith, itself so beautiful a thing.[15]

Gaston's awareness of death verges on the bizarre. Though

12. Ferris, The Church of England (Penguin, 1964), p.42
13. Gaston, p.1.
14. Ibid. p.21.
15. Ibid. p.24.

there is none of the grisly dwelling on mortality seen in some of the Imaginary Portraits, there is some languishing over decay:

> The abundant relics of the Church of Chartres were for the most part perished remnants of the poor human body itself .... It was in one's hand - the finger of an Evangelist.[16]

Gaston cannot share the joy of the Easter celebration of the Resurrection, but he does enjoy the gloom of Lent. Easter:

> never cleared away the Lenten preoccupation with Christ's death and passion; the empty tomb, with the white clothes lying, was still a tomb; there was no human worth in the 'spiritual body'.[17]

Christianity, for Marius, had been primarily a symbol of hope, an ideal offering regeneration. But Gaston, in possession of this Christianity, seems to see little but decay.

As in Marius, there is a constant movement in Gaston, towards a static representation of reality. Everything becomes a tableau; the present moment is turned into a work of art. Gaston's three friends are 'inseparably linked together, like some complicated pictorial arabesque'.[18] Significantly, it is from a book that Gaston receives 'the scent and colour of the field flowers, the amorous business of the birds'.[19] Describing a landscape, Gaston comments:

16. Gaston, p.30.
17. Ibid. p.134.
18. Ibid. p.50
19. Ibid. p.54.

> And still, as in some sumptuous tapestry, the architecture, the landscape, were but a setting for the human figures.[20]

The tumult of the French court is theatrical:

> Gaston had the sense, not so much of nearness to the springs of great events, as the likeness of the whole matter to a stageplay with its ingeniously contrived encounters, or the assortments of a game of chance.[21]

Again like Marius, the static representation of events sometimes makes the most catastrophic occurrence imperceptible to the reader. Even the collapse of a Cathedral is hardly noticed. Gaston is standing just outside the building, wondering whether to return inside:

> When under a shower of massy stones from the coulevrines or great cannon of the beseigers, the entire roof of the place sank into the empty space behind him.[22]

The level of writing has never changed, and all drama is eliminated. For the fictional narrative is not important. External events are of secondary importance to the movements of the individual mind. Gaston acquires a wife, unknown to the reader. We are given only an oblique introduction to her, when Gaston is about to leave her:

> But the yellow-haired woman, light of soul, whose husband he had become by dubious and irregular Huguenot rites, the religious sanction of which he hardly recognised - flying after his last tender kiss, with the babe in her womb, from her home, and the slaughter of his kinsmen, supposed herself treacherously deserted.[23]

20. Gaston, p.78.
21. Ibid. p.79.
22. Ibid. p.46.
23. Ibid. p.119.

Gaston takes concentration on the present moment much further than Marius, where we were always conscious of the necessity for forward movement, and where 'God was becoming'. In Gaston, Pater revels much more openly in ritual for its own sake. The hope of a future ideal matters less than the elaboration of the actual. Redemption has become a ritual; faith is no longer essential to religion, which has become pure form:

> All those various 'offices', which in Pontifical, Missal and Breviary, devout imagination had elaborated from age to age with such a range of spiritual colour and light and shade, with so much poetic tact in quotation, such a depth of insight into the Christian soul, had joined themselves harmoniously together.[24]

The beauty of holiness has completely degenerated into the 'elegance of sanctity'.[25] Gaston openly takes part in Church ceremony because he enjoys the ritual of the liturgy. Gaston is:

> habituated to yield himself to the poetic guidance of the Catholic Church in her wonderful, yearlong dramatic version of the story of the Redemption.[26]

Much of Pater's absorbtion in liturgy seems to come from his almost anthropological interest in the development of ritual. He is concerned with the basic human responses which are formulated and defined by Rite. In his treatment of the conflict of Absolute and Relative, he is conscious that reliance on the immediacy of personal experience discounts the total value of

24. Gaston, p.30.
25. Marius II, p.123.
26. Gaston, p.133.

corporate human experience. In Marius, Christianity is presented as a way of coming to terms with the past, expressing the yearnings of past and present through ritual. Eclectic, it is capable of expressing the pagan instinct as well as the religious, through its ceremonies. In Gaston we are aware of the secular, underlying the forms of the spiritual, as in Pater's description of the boys' singing:

> the eloquent, far reaching, aspiring words, floated melodiously from them, sometimes, with truly medieval license, singing to the sacred music those songs from the streets (no one cared to detect) which were really in their hearts.[27]

For, despite his gesturing to the Unseen, and his religious impulses, Pater's main concern is that of the humanist. Marius depicts Christianity as the regeneration of man, without the reconciliation of man with God:

> It was Christianity in its humanity, or even its humanism, in its generous hopes for man, its common sense and alacrity of cheerful service, its sympathy with all creatures in its appreciation of beauty and daylight ...[28]

which attracted him. The Church upholds man's dignity: it has 'dignifying convictions about human nature'.[29] For Marius, like Gaston, is conscious of human suffering, and anxious for the increase of man's nobility. Partly, in Gaston, this awareness of suffering is a sentiment giving way to melancholia - he is conscious of: 'the great stream of human tears falling

27. Gaston, p.35.
28. Marius II, p.115.
29. Marius II, p.123.

always through the shadows of the world'.[30] But there is also a conscious evaluation of his own responsibility towards the totality of suffering:

> Poor Gaston's very human soul was vexed at the spectacle of the increased hardness of human life with certain misgivings from time to time at the contrast of his own luxurious tranquillity.[31]

After the Saint Bartholomew massacre, he feels guilty at his own involvement in the slaughter, albeit an indirect involvement. He thinks of his own irresponsible self-centred passage through life. His wife, deserted more by accident than by intent, becomes for him a symbol of universal suffering, 'representative of the suffering of the whole world'.[32] However, Gaston, like Marius, remains a spectator, never actively involved in the scene around him. He is entirely absorbed by his own sense experience. The moral comment, therefore, in Gaston, seems superfluous, for we are never completely convinced of Pater's own belief in the need for progression beyond the 'here and now'. This is so in his treatment of Montaigne, the advocate of the 'relative spirit'. He propounds a rationalist philosophy, based entirely on evaluation of immediate experience. Pater's arbitrary comment, that Montaigne's was a 'house of Circe', with its inherent suggestion of evil, is not borne out by the rest of his treatment of Montaigne, and the suggestions of his limitations:

30. Gaston, p.23.
31. Ibid. p.59.
32. Ibid. p.130.

> Did he fear perhaps the practical responsibility of getting to the very bottom of certain matters?[33]

seem unnecessary in context. Perhaps Pater's awareness of the moral responsibility of the writer, an awareness which caused him to alter and cut many of his articles, led him to insert these warnings. The form of Gaston imposes upon him the necessity of development, if it is to parallel Marius, as he evidently intended. Yet, apart from a gesturing to the Unknown, Pater barely recognises any necessity for spiritual movement. The moment of beauty, arrested in prose, is enough. Spiritually, the 'religion of Numa', as it appears here, in the guise of Roman Catholic ritual, satisfies him. Where Marius wanted to move beyond the religion of Numa, seeing, as he did, its inadequacies in the face of the realities of experience, Gaston is from the outset in possession of a ritual which includes and expresses all human experience. He is virtually at the position which Marius reaches only at the end of the novel. The only possibility of development after this would demand 'revelation'. Gaston's position is parallel to that reached by Marius, and the reason for Pater's abandonment of Gaston is probably found in his inability, or unwillingness, to portray this 'revelation'.

Sister Edna Mary, in her book The Religious Life writes of the certitude demanded by many people before they can

33. Gaston, p.114.

commit themselves to God. She points out that conviction before commitment is impossible, and in illustrating this, refers to a passage from Sartre's L'Age de Raison. This passage seems to throw light, too, on why Pater cannot move forward with Gaston:

> If you are going to depend on some private revelation before making up your mind, you risk waiting a long time. Do you think that I was convinced when I joined the Communist party? A conviction is something you have to evolve (Une conviction, ça se fait) Mathieu smiled sadly. "I know; throw yourself on your knees, and you will come to believe. But as for me, I want to believe first". "Naturally", said Brunet impatiently, "you are all the same, you intellectuals. Here we are, on the verge of a revolution, guns are going off on their own accord - and you calmly stand there, claiming the right to be convinced".[34]

Pater finds such commitment impossible: though Marius and Gaston participate in the ritual of the Church, they remain spiritually outsiders, awaiting revelation, yet unconvinced. The result is impasse, a situation where there can be no progression, merely an elaboration of the immediate predicament. The pilgrim path is no longer attractive, and the book flounders because there is no direction in which it could develop.

Thus, despite Pater's attempts to provide a sequel to it, Marius remains his only full length fictional work. Yet it is not his only completed work of fiction. During the twelve

34. Sister Edna Mary, The Religious Life (Pelican, 1968), p.15; from Sartre, L'Age de Raison (Librairie Gallimard, Paris, 1949), p.128.

years between the publication of his first book, Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873) and the appearance of his second, Marius, he had, as Evans points out,[35] been through a period of much experimentation, in which he had made several false starts in several very different directions. He had published three essays on Greek myths in 1876, and had in view a book on Shakespeare. He had also discovered a new form, the 'imaginary portrait' and in 1878 published The Child in the House, in Macmillan's Magazine.[36] This was meant to be the first in a series of essays, though it was complete in itself. Of the projected series, only one further fragment remains. This is An English Poet, which was meant to be the second instalment of the series, and which was left unfinished. The 'portrait' breaks off abruptly in the middle of a sentence, whether because Pater never completed it, or because the final pages have been lost or destroyed, it seems impossible to determine. It was first published in April 1931 by Mary Ottley, in the Fortnightly Review.[37]

The Child in the House was fictionalized autobiography, and Pater obviously considered it an important landmark in his literary development. As he wrote to himself on a small

35. Letters p.xxvii.
36. Pater, 'The Child in the House', MM XXXVIII (August 1878), p.313-321.
37. Pater, 'An English Poet', FR CXXXV (April 1931), p.433-448.

scrap of paper that survives among the Harvard manuscripts: 'Child in the House: voila, the germinating, original, source, specimen, of all my imaginative work'.[38] His later work moves away from such close connection with his own life, to deal with historical, legendary and mythological material. But he continued to use the 'imaginary portrait' technique for the rest of his life. Marius was 'an imaginary portrait', as Pater wrote to Violet Paget,[39] and after Marius was published, a series of short portraits appeared in Macmillan's Magazine. These were A Prince of Court Painters (1885), Denys l'Auxerrois (1886), Sebastian van Storck (1886) and Duke Carl of Rosenmold (1887). These were gathered together in book form and appeared as Imaginary Portraits in 1887.

Since Marius was thus an example of a particular type of writing which was to be repeated throughout Pater's career, it is necessary to look at the early 'portraits', as well as the collected portraits, to distinguish themes and preoccupations which occur within Marius itself.

From the earliest 'portrait', The Child in the House, Pater's interest is in the developing individual consciousness, rather than in external events. In this preoccupation, Pater is perhaps a man of his time. As Dr. Dixon Hunt says:

38. Letters p.xxix.
39. Letters p.51. 22 July 1883.

> It was a century which was perpetually fascinated by the self, a fascination which was supplemented by the growing interest in psychology. It is not surprising that one of the most famous novels of the end of the century, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) should be an examination of the split personality.[40]

In The Child, he traces the development of the boy's personality, 'that process of brain building by which we are, each one of us, what we are'.[41] Like Marius, the boy will be a pilgrim. Here he is setting out on the first stage of that 'mental journey'. Pater is concerned with the processes of mental development, rather than with the world itself, for he sees the mind as shaping the 'real' world. 'Knower' cannot be separated from the 'known', and in fact the 'known' depends on the knower. Pater formulates this most clearly in his essay on Style which appeared in Appreciations in 1889. Here he distinguishes between 'fact' and the artist's apprehension of fact. The artist's work is:

> an expression no longer of fact but of his sense of it, his peculiar intuition of a world, prospective, or discerned below the faulty conditions of the present, in either case somewhat from the actual world.[42]

What matters is the vision 'within', and in the chaos of the modern world, the truth of individual perception becomes even more important. Since the individual's perception of the world is unique, then his mode of expression of this world must also be unique. The writer must forge his own expression for this

40. J. Dixon Hunt, The PreRaphaelite Legacy to the Eighteen Nineties (PhD. Thesis, September 1963), p.135.
41. Miscellaneous Studies, p.173.
42. Appreciations, p.8.

unique vision:

> With his peculiar sense of the world ever in view, in search of an instrument for the adequate expression of that, he begets a vocabulary faithful to the colouring of his own spirit, and in the strictest sense original.[43]

In The Child we see the development of Pater's idea of the artistic temperament. His hero, Florian Deleal, is developing his 'sense of the world', his personal sense of fact, 'his peculiar intuition of a world, prospective or discerned below the faulty conditions of the present'.[44]

Of the later 'imaginary portraits', Sebastian van Storck has perhaps the most developed awareness of the unique nature of his vision of the world:

> And what pure reason affirmed, in the first place, as 'the beginning of wisdom', was that the world is but a thought, or series of thoughts, existent, therefore, solely in mind. It showed him, as he fixed the mental eye with more and more of self absorbtion on the facts of his intellectual existence, a picture or vision of the universe as actually the product, so far as he really knew it, of his own lonely thinking power - of himself, there, thinking: as being zero without him.[45]

Here, and throughout the Imaginary Portraits, Pater asserts the primacy of the individual consciousness.

This awareness of the unique nature of the individual's vision of the world leads to a sense of personal isolation. Marius is always a detached spectator, essentially alone

43. Appreciations, p.8.
44. Ibid. p.8.
45. Imaginary Portraits, p.104.

despite friendship with Cornelius or Cecilia. This isolation is shared by the other heroes of Pater's portraits. The English Poet, for instance, is cut off physically, and emotionally, from the kind of environment where his particular kind of artistic temperament could flourish:

> Those impossible mountains reinforcing the barrier of his birth as he thought, did but stimulate by limitation the imaginative sense of it. Beyond them flowed the tide of real existence, great affairs and great creations.[46]

Significantly, it is Sebastian van Storck, who thought the actual world, 'but a transient perturbation of the absolute mind', who is perhaps the most isolated and lonely of Pater's portraits. Convinced of the incommunicable nature of his own experience, he becomes completely withdrawn, and begins a process of deliberate self-annihilation:

> Detachment: to hasten hence: to fold up one's whole self, as a vesture put aside: to anticipate, by such individual force as he could find in him, the slow disintegration by which Nature herself is levelling the eternal hills: - here would be the secret of peace, of such dignity and truth as there could be in a world which after all was essentially an illusion.[47]

Pater's fictional heroes share this concentration on the individual's perception of reality which isolates them from the rest of the world. It is in an attempt to escape from this isolation that Marius seeks the communal experience of the Christian Church. Fellowship within the Church represents an end to alienation, a haven after the journey.

46. An English Poet, p.441.
47. Imaginary Portraits, p.110.

For all Pater's heroes are looking for a 'home', and for all the security and warmth that, traditionally, 'home' represents. Houghton discusses this search for a home in his book The Victorian Frame of Mind,[48] and quotes from Froude's Nemesis of Faith. Here Froude comments:

> The longing for an earlier world of religious hope and the social communion of a common faith fastens on two images, historical and personal. The lost world is 'placed' either in a previous period, in the childhood of the race, or in one's own childhood where the early home can readily become the symbol of a companionship which was once both divine and human.

This comment is true of Pater, who continually creates for his heroes an ordered, secure home which, once they have left, they strive vainly to recapture. The sense of nostalgia for home and security is particularly strong in The Child in the House:

> The wistful yearning towards home, in absence from it, as the shadows of evening deepened, and he followed in thought what was doing there from hour to hour, interpreted to him much of a yearning and regret he experienced afterwards, towards he knew not what, out of strange ways of feeling and thought in which, from time to time, his spirit found itself alone.[49]

Home takes on a religious significance: it is a 'half-spiritualised house',[50] 'a sort of material shrine or sanctuary of sentiment',[51] an 'earthly tabernacle'.[52] This religious imagery recurs in Marius. In the 'old religion', home was sacred, 'an altar',[53] and Marius's development, as a young man, away

48. W.E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (Yale University Press, 1957).
49. Miscellaneous Studies, p.180.
50. Ibid. p.173.
51. Ibid. p.178.
52. Ibid. p.180.
53. Marius I, p.4.

from the childhood values embodied by home, is seen as a transference of loyalty to a 'rival religion'.[54] Home for Pater, is a typically English bourgeois existence:

> As, after many wanderings, I have come to fancy that some parts of Surrey and Kent are, for Englishmen, the true landscape, true home-counties, by right, partly, of a certain earthy warmth in the yellow of the sand below their gorse-bushes, and of a certain grey blue mist after rain.[55]

It is orderly and suburban, and is the symbol of refined tranquillity. It is also secure, cut off from the vicissitudes of modern life, a place 'enclosed' and 'sealed', from which it is possible to look out upon other fields and other ranges of experience.

This reverence for home and search for security are found throughout the imaginary portraits. The birthplace of the English poet is an isolated farmhouse where 'the principle of the chez-soi is complete'.[56] When the poet becomes dissatisfied in his Cumberland village, it is the values of home which restrain him from giving way to his ingratitude:

> A deep sense of warmth and rest at mind in the plain home burnt strong as at a red hearth in him, correcting what there was of selfishness in that longing for an exquisite and refined existence.[57]

In Sebastian van Storck, Pater records that the outer forms of religion had become identified with the Dutch home:

54. Marius I, p.44.
55. Miscellaneous Studies, p.179.
56. An English Poet, p.436.
57. Ibid. p.442.

> But we may fancy that something of the religious spirit had gone, according to the law of the transmutation of forces, into the scrupulous care for cleanliness, into the grave, old-world, conservative beauty of Dutch houses.[58]

Yet the idea of home and its beauty is not seen solely in terms of a religious ideal. Mixed with the awareness of beauty is the awareness of death and decay. Hough sums this up:

> Through all the careful delicacy of the writing the flavour of what has often been called Pater's morbidity is still apparent. Morbid is often a question-begging term; but what is really meant by it here is I suppose the suggestion in Pater's writing of some half-developed sexual deviation, of which we catch hints in the alliance between love and pain, the half-fear of sensuous impressions, the resultant languor.[59]

We have already seen the fusion of the love/death/beauty/decay themes in Marius - the rest of the Imaginary Portraits share the same concerns. In The Child in the House, Florian becomes aware simultaneously of beauty and pain:

> From this point he could trace two predominant processes of mental change in him - the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and, parallel with this, the surprisingly rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright colour and form - In music sometimes the two sorts of impressions came together, and he would weep, to the surprise of older people.[60]

Significantly, this awareness develops within the home: the values of 'home' are inextricably linked with death and decay. Florian's strong 'sense of home' is closely linked to his fear of death. It makes him think of 'sleep in the home churchyard,

58. Imaginary Portraits, p.86.
59. Hough, p.170,
60. Miscellaneous Studies, p.181.

... dead cheek by dead cheek, and with the rain soaking in upon one from above'.[61]

In the later portraits, this dwelling on death becomes more pronounced. Sebastian van Storck envies the dead:

> There came with it the odd fancy that he himself would like to have been dead and gone long ago, with a kind of envy of those whose deceasing was so long since over.[62]

He is described as being 'in love with death'.[63]

Duke Carl of Rosenmold opens with the discovery of two corpses: the 'fascination' of death is repeatedly emphasised, and death advances the plot. Carl decides to 'assist at his own obsequies' and soon becomes absorbed in 'the pleasing gloom'[64] of organisation:

> Youth was ready to indulge in the luxury of decay, and amuse itself with fancies of the tomb.[65]

Denys l'Auxerrois is perhaps the most death-conscious of the portraits. Beauty and death are constant partners. A new age of beauty and joy seems to dawn in Auxerre after the finding of an old Greek coffin. The birth of Denys is closely connected with death:

> The child, a singularly fair one, was found alive, but the mother dead, by lightning-stroke as it seemed, not far from her lord's chamber-door, under the shelter of a ruined ivy-clad tower.[66]

61. Miscellaneous Studies, p.179.
62. Imaginary Portraits, p.94.
63. Ibid. p.98.
64. Ibid. p.136.
65. Ibid. p.136.
66. Ibid. p.59.

Throughout the essay, there is a dwelling on the physical facts of corruption which becomes repulsive:

> The pavement of the choir, removed amid a surging sea of lugubrious chants, all persons fasting, discovered as if it had been a battle-field of mouldering human remains. Their odour rose plainly above the plentiful clouds of incense ...[67]

Once again, death and religion are associated. Taking this association further, Denys chooses a 'ghastly shred' from the bones, to wear, crucifix-like, round his neck. The link between death and the home is also suggested. Denys has become a grave digger, and suddenly decides to dig up his long-buried mother from unconsecrated ground, to rebury her in the cloister of the Church:

> The bones, hastily gathered, he placed, awfully but without ceremony, in a hollow space prepared secretly within the grave of another.[68]

Denys' death, although justified in terms of the Heine-like 'Dionysiac return' theme that Pater is exploring, is particularly gruesome.

In this linking of beauty and death, Pater is writing within a tradition well-known to the Romantics, a tradition which Mario Praz has explored at length in his book The Romantic Agony.[69] At the beginning of his chapter on The Beauty of the Medusa, Praz quotes in full Shelley's poem on

67. Imaginary Portraits, p.69.
68. Ibid. p.74.
69. M. Praz, The Romantic Agony (O.U.P., 1951).

the Uffizi Gallery's Medusa, which he calls almost 'a manifesto of the conception of Beauty peculiar to the Romantics'.[70] To Shelley, the Medusa blends beauty and horror:

> It lieth, gazing on the midnight sky,
> Upon the cloudy mountain-peak supine;
> Below, far lands are seen tremblingly;
> Its horror and its beauty are divine.
>
> Upon its lips and eyelids seem to be
> Loveliness like a shadow, from which shine,
> Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath,
> The agonies of anguish and of death.

The Medusa contains 'the tempestuous loveliness of terror', and combines pleasure with pain. The objects which should induce a shudder - the livid face of the severed head, the squirming mass of vipers, the rigidity of death, the sinister light, the repulsive animals, the lizard, the bat - all these give rise to a new sense of beauty, a contaminated, gruesome beauty. Pater, writing of the Medusa in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci,[71] pointed out this connection of beauty and decay:

> What may be called the fascination of corruption penetrates in every touch its exquisitely finished beauty.[72]

Mario Praz sees the Romantic preoccupation with the beauty of corruption as the culminatory point of the aesthetic theory of the Horrid and the Terrible which had gradually developed during the course of the eighteenth century. He postulates that the 'new sensibility' had begun to appear clearly in compositions such as Collins' Ode to Fear, and Walpole's The Castle

70. M. Praz, The Romantic Agony (O.U.P., 1951), p.25.
71. First published in FR (November 1869).
72. The Renaissance, p.106.

of Otranto: 'The discovery of Horror as a source of delight and beauty ended by reacting on men's actual conception of beauty itself: the Horrid, from being a category of the Beautiful, ended by becoming one of its essential elements, and the "beautifully horrid" passed by insensible degrees into the "horribly beautiful".'[73] The discovery of the connection of beauty and the repugnant was not new: what was novel was the conception of pain as an integral part of desire. The philosopher Novalis, to whom Pater refers several times throughout his works, pointed out this connection: 'It is strange that the association of desire, religion and cruelty should not have immediately attracted men's attention to the intimate relationship which exists between them, and to the tendency which they have in common'.[74]

Praz refers to the many expressions of this connection between pain and pleasure; it lies behind Shelley's To a Skylark:

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought

and Musset's La Nuit de Mai:

Les plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux.

'All through the literature of Romanticism, down to our times, there is an insistence on this theory of the inseparability of pleasure and pain, and, on the practical side, a search for

73. Praz, p.27.
74. Quoted by Praz, p.28.

themes of tormented, contaminated beauty'.[75]

In a letter written in 1853, Flaubert writes of the pleasure he derived from a melancholy, graveyard scene. It is a passage which could have come from one of Pater's Imaginary Portraits:

> Cela me rappelle Jaffa, où en entrant je humais à la fois l'odeur des citronniers et celle des cadavres: le cimetière défoncé laissait voir les squelettes à demi pourris, tandis que les arbustes verts balançaient au dessus de nos têtes leurs fruits dorés.[76]

Flaubert writes of the 'great synthesis' of beauty and death, and Praz maintains that this synthesis is one of the major features of the Romantic movement: 'In fact, to such an extent were Beauty and Death looked upon as sisters by the Romantics that they became fused into a sort of two-faced herm, filled with corruption and melancholy and fatal in its beauty - a beauty of which, the more bitter the taste, the more abundant the enjoyment'.[77] Thus, Pater's Duke Carl of Rosenmold, indulging as he does, in the 'luxury of decay',[78] is part of a tradition, as well as an expression of Pater's own temperament. Pater's conception of beauty is Medusan, a beauty tainted with pain, corruption and death.

75. Praz, p.28.
76. Quoted by Praz, p.29.
77. Ibid. p.31.
78. Imaginary Portraits, p.136.

James Stevens Curl, in his book The Victorian Celebration of Death,[79] refers constantly to the Victorian enjoyment of 'the sweet smell of decay'. He claims that 'melancholy was a fashionable illness',[80] and cites lines, first quoted in Basil Clarke's Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century (1938, p.11):

> With solemn delight I survey
> The corpse when the spirit is fled,
> In love with the beautiful clay,
> And longing to lie in its stead.

The Industrial Revolution had brought wealth and death: dense concentration of people, and the frequency of death made it hard to forget the ephemeral nature of existence. In 1842, the average age at death of a professional man and his family was thirty, while it was only seventeen for mechanics, labourers and their families.[81] Undertakers grew rich, mourning became deep and prolonged, and governed by elaborate rules of etiquette. Curl argues that today 'our society is engaged in a conspiracy to pretend that death does not exist, corpses, bones, funerals, and mourning being kept well out of sight and segregated from everyday life'.[82] By contrast, to the Victorians, death was an ever-present reality, and the celebration of Death not the perversion which it may appear to the present day student.

79. James Stevens Curl, The Victorian Celebration of Death (David Charles, 1972).
80. Ibid. p.24.
81. Ibid. p.20.
82. Ibid. p.xiv.

Pater's preoccupation with death is evident throughout his fictional work. We see it in one of his final 'imaginary portraits', Emerald Uthwart, first published in the New Review of June/July 1892, and later published in Miscellaneous Studies. This portrait opens with death, in a consideration of epitaphs. Our first introduction to the hero is through his tombstone. The portrait ends as it began, with death, the final pages being a doctor's assessment of the hero's corpse. Once again, in this portrait, we see the themes which have occurred in the Imaginary Portraits and in Marius the Epicurean. Emerald, like Marius, is devoted to his home, his 'very English home'.[83] However, he is alienated from it, and although he is 'seemingly rooted in the spot where he has come to flower',[84] he spends most of his life isolated from it. He returns home only when his death is near. At school, he appears composed and self-sufficient, but 'at nights ... the very touch of home, so soft, yet so indifferent to him, reached him with a sudden opulent rush of garden perfumes ...'[85]

Like Marius, Emerald Uthwart seems isolated from the world about him. The boys at his school feel he suffers no pain, and he takes the blame, apparently submissive, for incidents which are not his responsibility. His detachment gives him

83. Miscellaneous Studies, p.201.
84. Ibid. p.203.
85. Ibid. p.212.

passivity and absolute submissiveness; he is essentially a spectator at the events which go on around him. But, as Marius dies for his Christian friend, so Emerald Uthwart is ready to incur disgrace and death for friendship's sake. This is the only act of participation of which Marius, like Emerald, is capable. Both remain spectators to the end, caught in the intolerable freedom, which is also isolation, of being present only.[86]

86. The art of the high wire', Times Literary Supplement, (26 February 1971), p.231.

Conclusion

Marius is always an isolated figure, a spectator at the pageant of events which passes before him. He is conscious of his isolation, and much of his spiritual journey is concerned with the search for a companion who will travel with him. It is the vision of the Christian community which so attracts him. The Christians can offer him a fellowship which will cut through this isolation. Yet, even though he seems to die a martyr's death, ironically, he is still alone, as isolated in death as he has been in life. Though surrounded by people, he is essentially detached and uninvolved.

In the same way as Marius is cut off from the world around him, so the reader is cut off from Marius. Although we are shown the intimate workings of his mind, we are always sympathetically distanced from him. Sometimes we are presented directly with his thoughts, in the form of a diary, but usually his 'sensations and ideas' are refracted to us through the narrator. The narrator becomes an intermediary, an intervening consciousness which cuts us off from the hero. There are only two lines of dialogue in the whole novel, at the end of Part I where Flavian is dying. In context, these jar, contrasting as they do with the indirect methods of character presentation which are used everywhere else in the novel.

We saw, in the introductory chapter of this study, that Marius was essentially autobiographical. Marius's journey is Pater's own. Similarly, Marius's isolation seems to be shared by Pater, and the theme of individual isolation is a recurring one in all his work. Pater refers to his isolation in a letter to William Sharp, written just after the publication of Marius in March 1885. Sharp had reviewed Marius in the Athenaeum,[1] and Pater wrote:

> Such recognition is especially a help to one whose work is so exclusively personal and solitary as the kind of literary work, which I feel I can do best, must be.[2]

Pater seems to have been a man who found it difficult to form close relationships with others. Always polite, charming, and urbane, his friends found it difficult to go beyond the affable exterior to reach the real man. Edmund Gosse commented on this in an article in the Contemporary Review which appeared after Pater's death:[3]

> He was an assiduous host, a gracious listener, but who could tell what was passing behind those half-shut, dark-grey eyes, that courteous and gentle mask?

Gosse commented:

> Pater, as a human being illustrated by no letters, by no diaries, by no impulsive unburdenings of himself to associates, will grow more and more shadowy.

Gosse seems to have been proved right. Even the recent

1. W. Sharp, 'Marius the Epicurean', Athenaeum, 2992 (28 February 1885) p.271-3.
2. Letters p.59. 1 March 1885.
3. Edmund Gosse, 'Walter Pater: A Portrait', CR, 66 (July - December 1894), p.795-810.

publication of Pater's letters, which might have been expected to reveal his thoughts and feelings directly, showed no more of 'the man behind the mask'. Urbane, polite, yet essentially unrevealing, the letters exhibited what the reviewer from the Times Literary Supplement called 'the art of the high wire',[4] a form of high manners, able to conciliate and please, without committing oneself to judgement. The correspondence is polite, reserved and conventional, yet reveals little of the writer.

For Pater, like his hero Marius, seems withdrawn from spontaneous human emotions and reactions. Gosse, considering this withdrawal, commented that Pater reflected, rather than generated, emotion and opinion:

> Each found in Pater what he brought: each saw in that patient, courteous indulgent mirror a pleasant reflection of himself.[5]

This mirror-like quality, found in Pater the man, is found also in his work. This is perhaps the most striking aspect of any study of Pater's writings. Other critics have commented on this:

> Pater illustrates the complexity of the age, which so deeply impressed him, by the multitude of strands which are twined together in his work ... No one carries the suggestion of more numerous and more various writers.[6]

4. 'The art of the high wire', TLS, (26 February, 1971), p.229-231.
5. Gosse, p.808
6. Hugh Walker, The Literature of the Victorian Era (Cambridge, 1910), p.1021.

As I have worked on Marius, I have been constantly surprised by the complexity of interests it reflects. It seems to have been influenced by so many different fields of study. Pater is aware of contemporary debate on a multiplicity of different topics. Scientific, religious and philosophic controversy are mirrored here; we are aware of Pater's debt to Arnold, his knowledge of German philosophy, his immersion in Classical Studies. The study of Marius takes the student far from the novel itself.

Yet it remains an expression of a uniquely personal predicament. Pater said, in his essay on Style that the writer's task was not to depict the actual, nor the 'realistic' but to present his own vision of the world:

> Literary art, that is, like all art which is in any way imitative or reproductive of fact - form, or colour, or incident - is the representation of such fact as connected with soul, of a specific personality, in its preferences, its volition and power.

Not the world itself, but the artist's perception of the world, is all important. And to depict this world, the artist must forge a unique language: he must have an 'architectural' conception of his work, searching for the 'one word' which will fit to perfection into the structure of his artistic creation:

> The one word for the one thing, the one thought, amid the multitude of words, terms, that might just do: ... the unique word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, essay or song, absolutely proper to the single mental presentation or vision within.[7]

7. Style, p.10.

Pater approached his work in this 'architectural' way, constantly correcting and revising, finding the exact word to fit into the structure of his work. Gosse records the way that Pater built up from an initial simple sentence to a complex structure:

> In the first draft the phrase would be a bald one; in the blank alternate line he would at leisure insert fresh descriptive or parenthetical clauses, other adjectives, more exquisitely related adverbs, until the space was filled.[8]

Pater recorded that Marius was the product of 'long labours'.[9] It is the reflection of an architectural conception of creative work. Every sentence has this 'architectural' conception, long elaborate constructions attempting to capture a unique vision of the world in words. The study of Pater's style would be a study in itself: it is enough to say here that the style contributes to our awareness that, though the book is so eclectic, yet it is an expression of an intensely personal situation. Although Marius reflects so many different interests, yet they are secondary to the book's main concern, the development of the isolated individual consciousness. Marius is withdrawn from the currents of contemporary interests, into his own mental world.

Pater constructed his works like buildings: they are 'monuments of unageing intellect', confronting the flux and

8. Gosse, p.807.
9. Letters p.58. 1 March 1885.

uncertainty of the temporal world. The detachment and isolation apparent in Marius the Epicurean is complete. Within the novel, Marius is isolated: the style of the novel makes it in itself a monument to Pater's isolation. Time is irrelevant; the world of Antonine Rome is that of Victorian England. Anachronisms abound. What is important is the movement of the individual mind, solidified into a monumental work of art, an architecturally conceived novel. In Sailing to Byzantium, Yeats' golden bird, though 'out of nature', and away from time, still sang of time, 'of what is past, or passing, or to come'. Yeats sees the work of art, not merely as a way to flee from time, but paradoxically, as a way to celebrate time.

Pater, by contrast, is concerned wholly with withdrawal. His world is not the teeming, loving world of salmon falls and mackerel-crowded seas, but a static world, a frieze of arrested activity. Marius the Epicurean, despite the evidence within it of Pater's numerous interests, and awareness of contemporary controversies, seems essentially dead. It is a monument, which we can look back at, even study with interest of an archaeological kind. But as a monument, it does not generate sympathetic involvement, and we are ultimately as isolated from it as Pater was from the world around him.

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